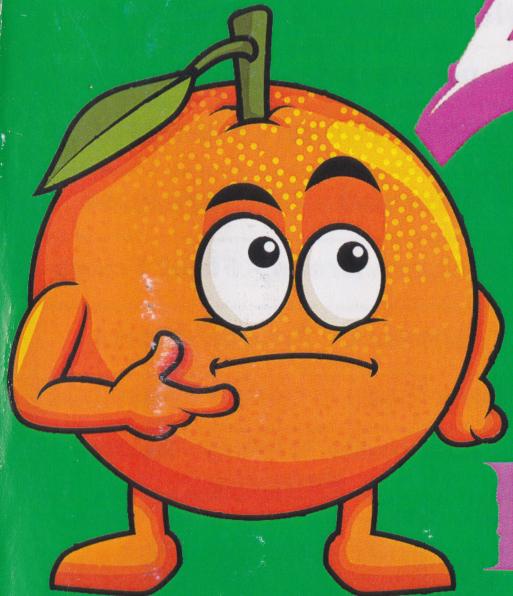


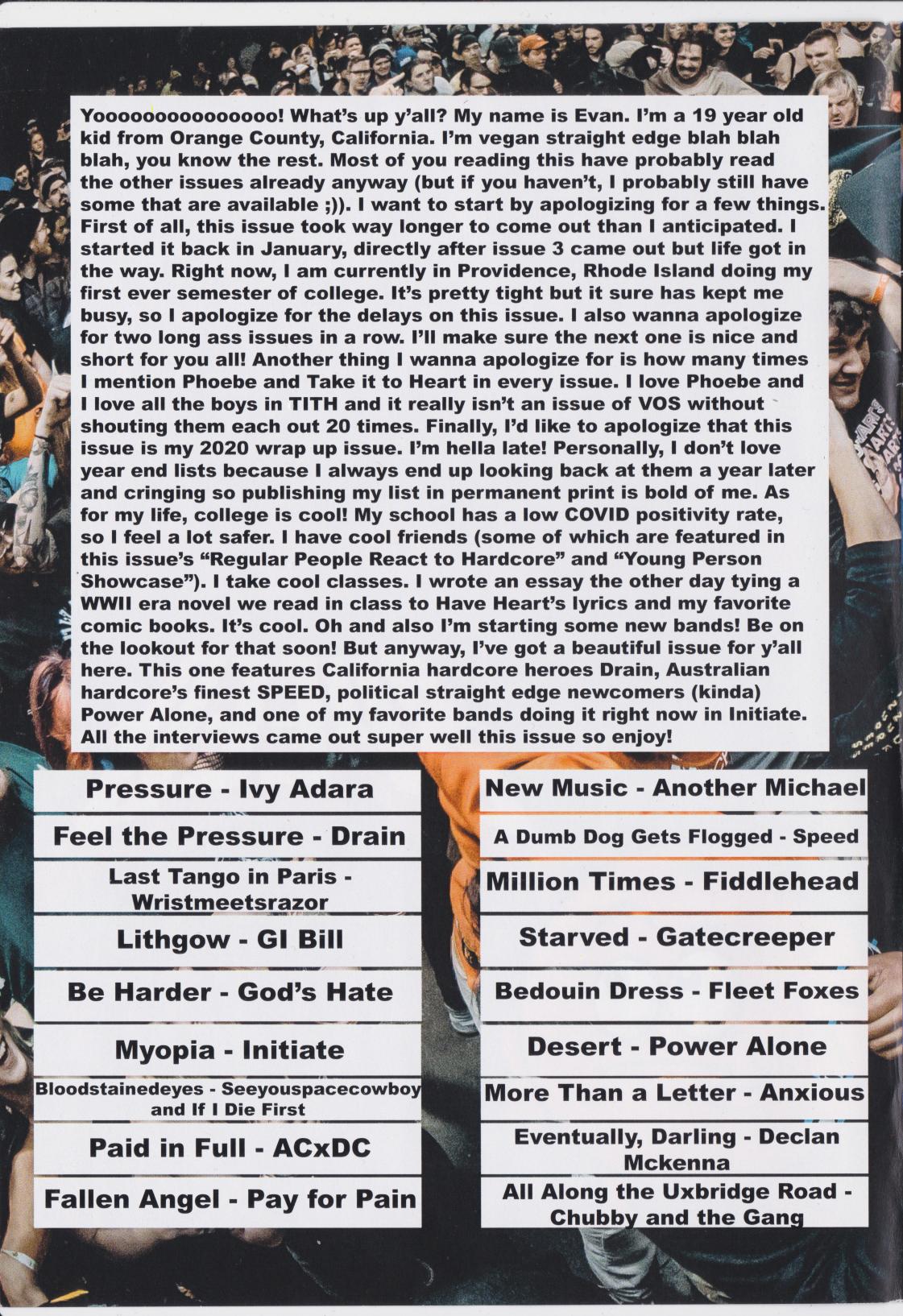
VOICE
OF
STRENGTH

DRAIN

SPEED



INITIATE
POWER ALONE



Yooooooooooooo! What's up y'all? My name is Evan. I'm a 19 year old kid from Orange County, California. I'm vegan straight edge blah blah blah, you know the rest. Most of you reading this have probably read the other issues already anyway (but if you haven't, I probably still have some that are available ;)). I want to start by apologizing for a few things. First of all, this issue took way longer to come out than I anticipated. I started it back in January, directly after issue 3 came out but life got in the way. Right now, I am currently in Providence, Rhode Island doing my first ever semester of college. It's pretty tight but it sure has kept me busy, so I apologize for the delays on this issue. I also wanna apologize for two long ass issues in a row. I'll make sure the next one is nice and short for you all! Another thing I wanna apologize for is how many times I mention Phoebe and Take it to Heart in every issue. I love Phoebe and I love all the boys in TITH and it really isn't an issue of VOS without shouting them each out 20 times. Finally, I'd like to apologize that this issue is my 2020 wrap up issue. I'm hella late! Personally, I don't love year end lists because I always end up looking back at them a year later and cringing so publishing my list in permanent print is bold of me. As for my life, college is cool! My school has a low COVID positivity rate, so I feel a lot safer. I have cool friends (some of which are featured in this issue's "Regular People React to Hardcore" and "Young Person Showcase"). I take cool classes. I wrote an essay the other day tying a WWII era novel we read in class to Have Heart's lyrics and my favorite comic books. It's cool. Oh and also I'm starting some new bands! Be on the lookout for that soon! But anyway, I've got a beautiful issue for y'all here. This one features California hardcore heroes Drain, Australian hardcore's finest SPEED, political straight edge newcomers (kinda) Power Alone, and one of my favorite bands doing it right now in Initiate. All the interviews came out super well this issue so enjoy!

Pressure - Ivy Adara

Feel the Pressure - Drain

**Last Tango in Paris -
Wristmeetsrazor**

Lithgow - GI Bill

Be Harder - God's Hate

Myopia - Initiate

**Bloodstainedeyes - Seeyouspacecowboy
and If I Die First**

Paid in Full - ACxDC

Fallen Angel - Pay for Pain

New Music - Another Michael

A Dumb Dog Gets Flogged - Speed

Million Times - Fiddlehead

Starved - Gatecreeper

Bedouin Dress - Fleet Foxes

Desert - Power Alone

More Than a Letter - Anxious

**Eventually, Darling - Declan
McKenna**

**All Along the Uxbridge Road -
Chubby and the Gang**

What I've Been Reading/Watching

V For Vendetta: Definitely one of, if not the best story I've ever read. V for Vendetta is a thrilling story written by Allan Moore that needs no introduction. It's without a doubt one of the best stories in the world of comic books and can hold its own against stories in other mediums as well. Thanks Jay.

Watchmen: Another Alan Moore classic that is without a doubt one of the best stories I've ever read. Honestly, hard to choose which one is better. Watchmen follows the dark psychology of being a superhero in the US in a time where the world is on the brink of WWIII. Thrilling from beginning to end.

DC Infinite Frontier: Last comic thing I'll mention (sorta). DC infinite Frontier just launched and it's sick. There's a million new titles to look out for and I've loved everything I've read. If you're following all this, PLEASE hit me up so we can talk.

Life and Times of Michael K: This novel was phenomenal. I had to read it for class but fell in love with it. It follows a man through South America during the nation's civil war. Michael wants to stay away from the all consuming horrors of the war but somehow always gets roped back in. The thing I love most about this novel was the way it made the most mundane parts of the story somehow the most interesting.

Devil in a Blue Dress: Damn this movie was great. I had never seen it or really heard much about it prior but it blew me away. The cast is phenomenal, the story is gripping, and I was hooked from start to finish. Don Cheadle was hilarious in it too. Love love love this movie. Top tier murder mystery.

Harley Quinn Animated Series: Man, I have too many good things to say about this show. Though it was a superhero show that takes place in the DC universe, it was more of a show about emotions. It felt a lot closer to a feel good show like New Girl than it did to any Batman story. It was hilarious and well done and I couldn't recommend it more. Definitely making Phoebe watch it with me.

End of the Fucking World: I watched this back when it came out but I've been rewatching it with a friend and it's been blowing my mind all over again. It's dark and violent yet touching and makes me happy when I watch it. It's the scariest and most exciting a feel good show can really be. Shoutout Leelya.

INITIATE

I've wanted to interview Crystal from Initiate for a while now. Though we'd had only a few interactions prior to this interview, she always struck me as an interesting character within the hardcore scene. She quotes literature in her lyrics, came into the scene in a similar way as me and carries herself in a way that glues your eyes to her performance while on stage. This interview also had some nostalgic significance for me seeing as that Initiate was the last set I saw before the pandemic hit. Crystal did not disappoint and was as thoughtful, intelligent, and interesting as I had hoped she would be. This interview occurred over Zoom on March 1st. All photos by Spencer Chamberlain.

Voice of Strength: I understand that you attended UCSB. With lyricists like Pat Flynn and yourself being clearly very intelligent wordsmiths, how do you feel being an educated individual influences your writing process in a genre that consisted mostly of middle and high schoolers at the point of its inception? Is it honoring the classics or is it expanding upon them?

Crystal: Being exposed to so many great works in college has made me way more critical of my own. It's made me more critical but it has also made me want to try harder. That's exactly what happened with Lavender. I had a professor who exposed me to so many works and authors who weren't educated and wrote some pretty incredible things. That was where I found the works of Alice Walker. One of my favorite anthologies, Words of Fire, led to me focusing in on the works of women of color. So that was something I tried to channel into my writing. It also kicked my ass because all that stuff sets a tough bar to hold yourself to. There are some lyricists I admire who I know didn't go to college. I don't think having an education makes you better or worse. I think the reason hardcore is a counterculture in the first place is because people began to self educate and realize their surroundings. They realized something was systematically wrong with things and created a space for people to question that and be angry. That in itself is educational. I feel that informal education should be viewed as equally as valuable as formal education.

VOS: I agree completely. Anyway, moving along: I've interviewed other people (namely Connie of seeyouspacecowboy) who cite the Che Cafe as not only a huge influence on their music taste but also as a place of education and community building? Why does the Che facilitate such a good environment for those that work there to grow as people and how can that community driven ethos that the Che promotes be implemented into the greater world outside of San Diego hardcore?

C: Wow! That's a loaded question. The Che definitely had a huge influence on the way I am and my way of thinking. It was very important to make sure everyone's voices were heard there. I remember one time someone brought up an interesting dilemma for us as a collective. As a Co-op, we try not to discriminate against any various organizations. We also try to use the Che as an open and utilized space but what if a hate group came in and wanted to use our space? It's an interesting discussion. How do you keep all these values in mind and what takes priority? We ultimately decided that hate groups shouldn't be permitted in the Che for any reason but it was a formative moment for me because of how it encouraged critical thinking. I think that is the ethos of the Che that I'd like to see other spaces have. It was not just a collective space for shows. It was a collective space for all walks of life and types of people with different causes. It has a ton of informational zines on the wall that you could just take and read. It was its own little library. It always was resourceful and had good information and I think that accessibility and community is what made it so great.

VOS: Is there anything in particular that you learned there that you use in your everyday life outside of hardcore?

C: During the time when the Che was gonna get evicted was the time when I was the most involved. I really learned how to respect other people's opinions and listen. I remember watching those group discussions at that time, not wanting to step on anyone's toes because I wasn't as involved with it as much as some other people in the room. Watching them facilitate a safe space between strangers to share in such an emotional fashion is what I took with me. The dynamic of that is something I've always wanted to emulate. Creating a space for people who are really passionate to be emotional while also making space for people like me, who aren't as involved, to throw out a suggestion is so special. Watching everyone organize made me realize you don't have to be a member of congress to get shit done. Not that they do anything in congress but all you need is a couple people who care.

VOS: I remember in the podcast interview you did with Forum of Passion, you mentioned your pie in the sky dream job was to be the US Secretary of Education. Is there any way you could take that lesson you just mentioned from the Che and apply that to your role as Secretary of Education?

could start changing policy, I would really have to utilize those listening skills to actively hear from the communities I am supposed to serve. I have to make sure I'm not missing anyone. If I were to just go straight into policy, I would have to be about listening to the teachers, the parents, and the students having not been in their position before. I think to implement that WHEN I become the Secretary of Education, it will be a constant battle to listen to all these voices when the only experience I can really empathize with fully is being a student. But I wasn't a deaf student, so I have to listen to my brother's experiences. I was not a black student so I have to listen to their experiences. That's a skill I'd use from the Che: Being able to invite these people with such high emotions regarding their kids' or their own education and making sure that I'm hearing the unheard.

C: This is actually a really cool question because I was just talking to my brother about this. I was asking him how I should start getting my foot in the door for grad school and he asked what I wanna go for because there's two different paths: I could start as a teacher and make my way up or start from above as a policy maker and listen on the way down. I feel like if I were to just go straight for a position where I



VOS: That's so interesting. I just got to college myself and I've found the way people go about things like education reform is a very punk thing. It's badass. So I think it's super cool to make those connections between hardcore and "the real world."

20 years old. I would hear everyone talk about being upset about not getting invited to a party and it was very odd because the issues I had were about not being able to go to office hours because I had two jobs to work right after class. Everyone else is doing their own thing and you just have to worry about you.

C: I had a nontraditional college experience in that I went to community college first. Did that for 6 years, then transferred. The lesson I learned from hardcore that helped me was that you really just have to keep throwing punches until you get a W. That and "Don't give a fuck about where you're at relative to everyone else." I say that because when I got to UCSB, I was 26 and all my classmates were 19 or

VOS: Funny enough, my girlfriend is a freshman at UCSB right now and she could very much use that advice. She's taking a very STEM heavy load because she was thinking about going into PreMed and she got hit hard with her workload. I think with your advice, it may help her figure out when she needs to do for herself. Anyway, to totally switch gears now on this interview: I understand you spent a lot of time when you were younger in the pop punk and warped tour scene. For a scene so ravaged by misogyny, abusers, and rockstar attitudes what can you draw from that scene that had an overtly positive impact on you today?

C: Wow! I feel like- This is a great interview. That's such a good question. I still love the pop punk scene!

VOS: I do too! And thank you so much, I really appreciate that.

C: I mean it! They're really intriguing questions. I'll get asked questions like, "What's it like being a woman in a hardcore band?" I like this interview. It's very thought provoking.

VOS: Thank you! That means a lot.

C: But back to the question! At the time that I was most into pop punk, the Wonder Years came out with My Last Semester. Man Overboard was big. Transit was huge. A lot of that had to do with being attuned to your emotions. Having the vulnerability bands like Knuckle Puck had was really cool. That stuff is encouraged in that scene! Having bands tell you that it's okay to feel the way you feel is the thing I love most about that scene. Early Story So Far was misogynistic but I really enjoyed watching them transform into what they are now. They grew as a band and as people. When I entered pop punk, I definitely had a bit of internalized misogyny. I had that backwards mentality, so to see the Story So Far grow as I've grown in a similar way is a really special thing.

VOS: How do you feel about the hate that music gets from the hardcore scene?

C: I think it's so stupid.

VOS: I agree. I see where the hate comes from but I can't help but feel like at least some of that is just hardcore kids hiding their Neck Deep tattoo under their Magnitude shirt. You know what I mean?

C: I feel like it's just hardcore's need to bully someone. There are some really cringey people in pop punk but it's not like those people aren't in hardcore too. So many people in the hardcore scene came from pop punk so we might as well embrace it.

VOS: Do you think that could change in the near future with Knocked Loose bringing so many people into the scene? I mean, I first saw them at Warped Tour.

C: I had some hope for that when Rotting Out and Stick to Your Guns went on tour with the Story So Far and Such Gold. Such Gold went on tour with Foundation too. That was a time where I think those two worlds could've meshed together but I think that's gone. I mean, Initiate is really good friends with Knuckle Puck and they toured with One Step Closer which gives me a little hope but it's just not the market right now. That's what sucks about hardcore people making fun of it. They're eliminating so many kids who could've gotten into hardcore. Now the scene is made up of mostly people over 25 like me. I love One Step Closer because they're making hardcore that is SO good and they're still so young. When these 30 year old dudes are making fun of 15 year olds on twitter-

VOS: No shit they do cringey stuff. They're 15 years old!

C: Exactly! I wish the scenes would come together at least a bit more.

VOS: Last question! What have you been listening to lately?

C: New Ariana Grande album is a banger. New Megan Thee Stallion record is also so good. Arlo Parks came out with a record that I just found. Buggin' just released a new single and that was super good. Shine blew me away. That's a good rock band from Seattle. I've been playing a lot of softer music. Hard times, I need softer music.

VOS: Thanks for doing this interview with me! Got any last words or shoutouts?

C: Everyone's trying their best every day and that's enough. But real quick, to circle back to the beginning of the interview: I heard the UCSB STEM program is notoriously difficult so the fact that your girlfriend is even going through it is super brave of her. Even getting past the first two years of that at all is amazing.

VOS: She is gonna love to hear that. She loves Initiate.

C: Aw yay!

VOS: I remember I DM'd you a while ago because she runs Hardcore Cookies and-

C: *Gasps* NO WAY. That's so cool!

Both Laugh

VOS: Yeah, that's her! She's gonna love to hear all this from you.

C: Making cookies and a STEM major! We love to see it!

Reflection: For real, that last part of the interview had me laughing so hard. But anyway, this interview was definitely among one of my favorites. I really enjoyed hearing Crystal's perspectives on all these topics. For those that don't know, Initiate just dropped their EP 'Lavender' last year. It's out on Triple B right now and I highly suggest you go and grab a copy.

Reacting to Classic Hardcore Bands

Welcome to me reacting to older hardcore bands. This series has been a constant since issue 1 and has always been fun as hell. For those that don't know, I got into the scene through the Warped Tour scene. I saw Knocked Loose at Warped Tour 2018 and was sold. My first hardcore show was Knocked Loose, Terror, Jesus Piece, and Year of the Knife in 2018. I still fucking love those bands but because that was my introduction to the scene, I didn't go through listening to all the classics until way later in my time in the scene. I feel like most people come into the scene through bands like Minor Threat or Gorilla Biscuits and a lot of those bands weren't on my radar until after I had found all the bands that were heavily influenced by them. My friends make fun of me for being such a younghead but I have no shame! I like what I like! Anyway, this issue imma react to Black My Heart (recommended by Ethan of xDetestx and Ultimatum), Disembodied (cuz I've seen them twice and loved it but never listened on my own), and Gorilla Biscuits (cuz I know their historical significance but have never listened to a full record). Enjoy!



Before the Devil - Black My Heart

Yo this record is insane. Easily my favorite thing I've listened to for this zine segment. So heavy and so influencial on the wave of hardcore we're in the midst of right now. This is another one of those records I listen to and realize half the shit I write is indirectly influenced by it. Not to mention the production on this record is phenomenal, especially for the time it was made. High point of the record was definitely Tick Tock. Just relentlessly heavy and made

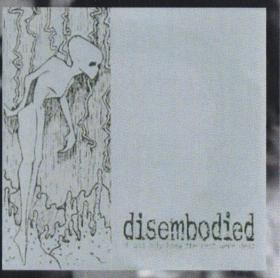
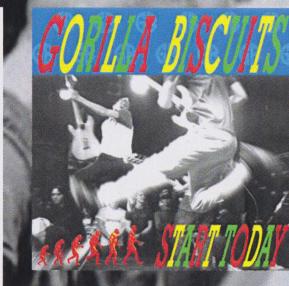
me miss shows way too much. Probably one of my favorite records from this era of hardcore. Boston scene was crazy at this point. These guys, Have Heart...I don't know what they were putting in the water there in the mid-2000s but this era of Boston hardcore has gotta go down as one of the best regional scenes in the genres history.

Favorite Tracks: My Way, Thick As Blood, Tick Tock

Start Today - Gorilla Biscuits

This was so refreshing to hear. I try to have at least a little bit of variety when it comes to this series and to be frank, I was getting a little sick of the youth crew stuff. Nothing against that stuff, I love that sound. The bands were just starting to blend together a little too much for my liking. This was a great wake up call though. Start Today really stands out in how much more melodic it was compared to other bands at the time. The clean vocals and lead guitar lines in tracks like New Directions immediately set GB apart from their contemporaries. Plus they got hella creative with it! The claps in the title track made me smile and the early hardcore breakdown was tight as hell!!! Real trailblazer shit. I don't know if this is controversial but I hear a lot of Have Heart in their sound. Maybe not Songs to Scream era Have Heart but I 100% see them as a continuation of this sound. This was sick

Favorite Tracks: New Direction, Forgotten, Start Today, Cats and Dogs

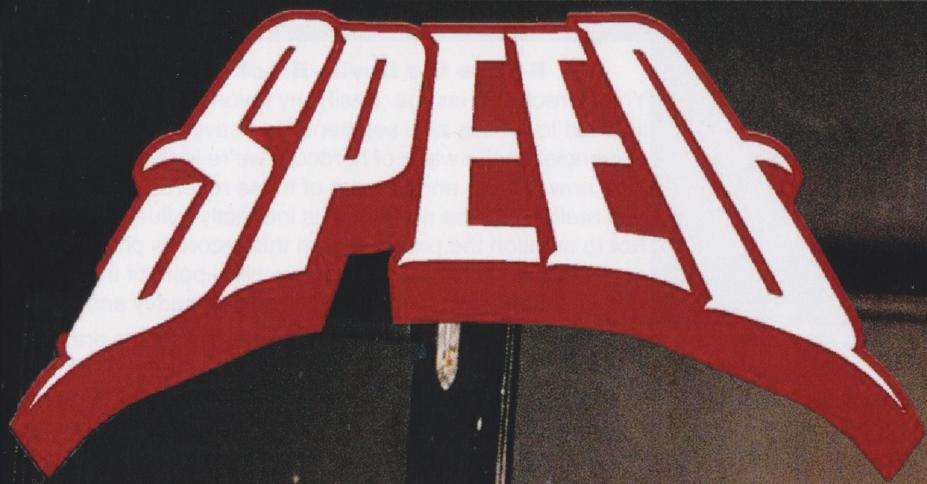


If God Only Knew the Rest Were Dead - Disembodied

This was definitely cool. Like I mentioned in the intro, I've seen these guys twice and they absolutely killed it both times so it's about time I listened. I think this band is super relavent these days because of how popular the bands it inspired have gotten. Disembodied's influence on bands like Knocked Loose, Code Orange, Sanction, and Bloodbather is undeniable and those are some of the biggest names in the genre these days. I think one thing I will say is that

today's modern production would definitely work in those guy's favor. Riffs like the one in Gone really don't hit as hard as they could have because of the production. Single string mosh riffs really need help to HIT. I know Will Putney remastered and did work on some of the old Disembodied tracks so maybe that'll be more my speed. Regardless, this EP is amazing and is a classic for a reason. I will most definitely keep seeing them every time I get the chance.

Favorite Tracks: Heroin Fingers, Gone

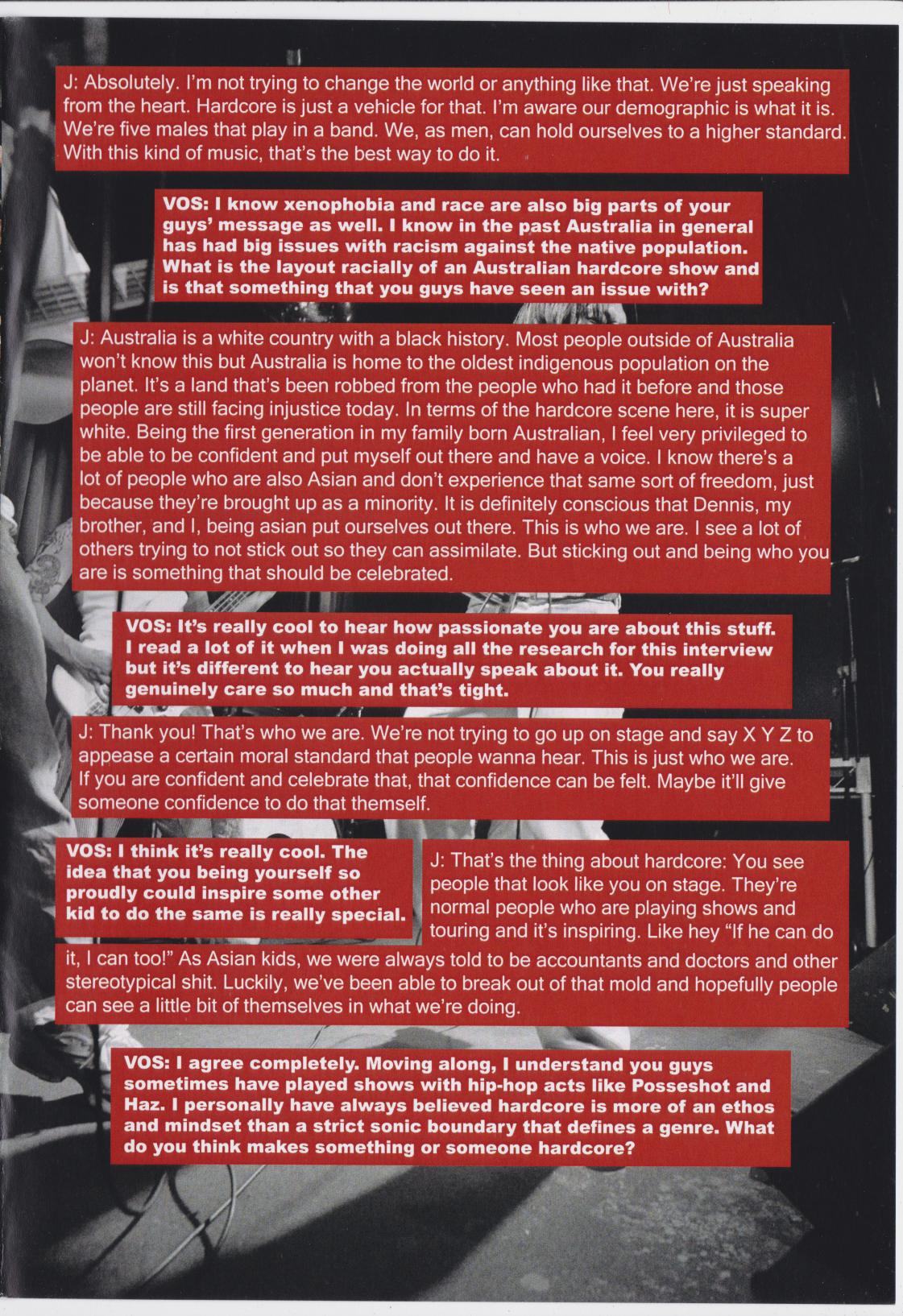


I found Speed when they dropped their badass 2020 Flex on Flatspot Records last year. The tracks immediately struck me as heavy as hell but still creative. The band knows how to mess with a listener's anticipation and expectations in a way I have only seen in the genre's heavyweights, like Knocked Loose. After my first listen, I had the iconic "SPEED" callout from their track 'A Dumb Dog Gets Flogged' stuck in my head and I was hooked. Speed is a phenomenal band who deserves some love. I was lucky enough to talk to Jem Siow, the band's singer to pick his brain on the innerworkings of the band and what they stand for. Jem ended up being an incredibly kind hearted person who I feel very fortunate to have gotten to know. This interview was conducted over the phone on 2/19/21. All photos by Zac Vinko and Jack Rudder.

Voice of Strength: I'm curious, I know SPEED puts a heavy emphasis on standing up to homophobia, xenophobia, toxic masculinity, and all forms of oppression. When writing instrumentals for the band, is that mindset expressed in any way or do you write a good instrumental and the compassionate lyrics and shit you say on stage follows? Was it a conscious decision to have an anti-toxic masculinity message veiled behind heavy and aggressive songs?

Jem: I think it's a conscious decision in that I'm very aware of who we are as people and that we can be different from the stereotype of heavy hardcore bands. It has been a conscious thing to couple that together and try to subvert people's expectations because I want to challenge that stereotype. I'm aware that there are people who get into harder music as a way to inflate their own sense of masculinity or use it as a way to exaggerate their own sense of aggression. We want to challenge that. It's important. You can be hard and aggressive in a way that detests toxic perspectives.

VOS: I think you guys provide a very important perspective in that sense. For people who don't know the band, they may show up to a show having heard a song and wanting to just beat people up in the pit. They may then hear what you have to say, and take it to heart being the people who need to hear that message most. I think what I'm trying to say is the people who need to hear your message against toxic masculinity in hardcore are more likely to be moshing at your set than some youth crew band and I really respect that you use your platform so well with that.



J: Absolutely. I'm not trying to change the world or anything like that. We're just speaking from the heart. Hardcore is just a vehicle for that. I'm aware our demographic is what it is. We're five males that play in a band. We, as men, can hold ourselves to a higher standard. With this kind of music, that's the best way to do it.

VOS: I know xenophobia and race are also big parts of your guys' message as well. I know in the past Australia in general has had big issues with racism against the native population. What is the layout racially of an Australian hardcore show and is that something that you guys have seen an issue with?

J: Australia is a white country with a black history. Most people outside of Australia won't know this but Australia is home to the oldest indigenous population on the planet. It's a land that's been robbed from the people who had it before and those people are still facing injustice today. In terms of the hardcore scene here, it is super white. Being the first generation in my family born Australian, I feel very privileged to be able to be confident and put myself out there and have a voice. I know there's a lot of people who are also Asian and don't experience that same sort of freedom, just because they're brought up as a minority. It is definitely conscious that Dennis, my brother, and I, being asian put ourselves out there. This is who we are. I see a lot of others trying to not stick out so they can assimilate. But sticking out and being who you are is something that should be celebrated.

VOS: It's really cool to hear how passionate you are about this stuff. I read a lot of it when I was doing all the research for this interview but it's different to hear you actually speak about it. You really genuinely care so much and that's tight.

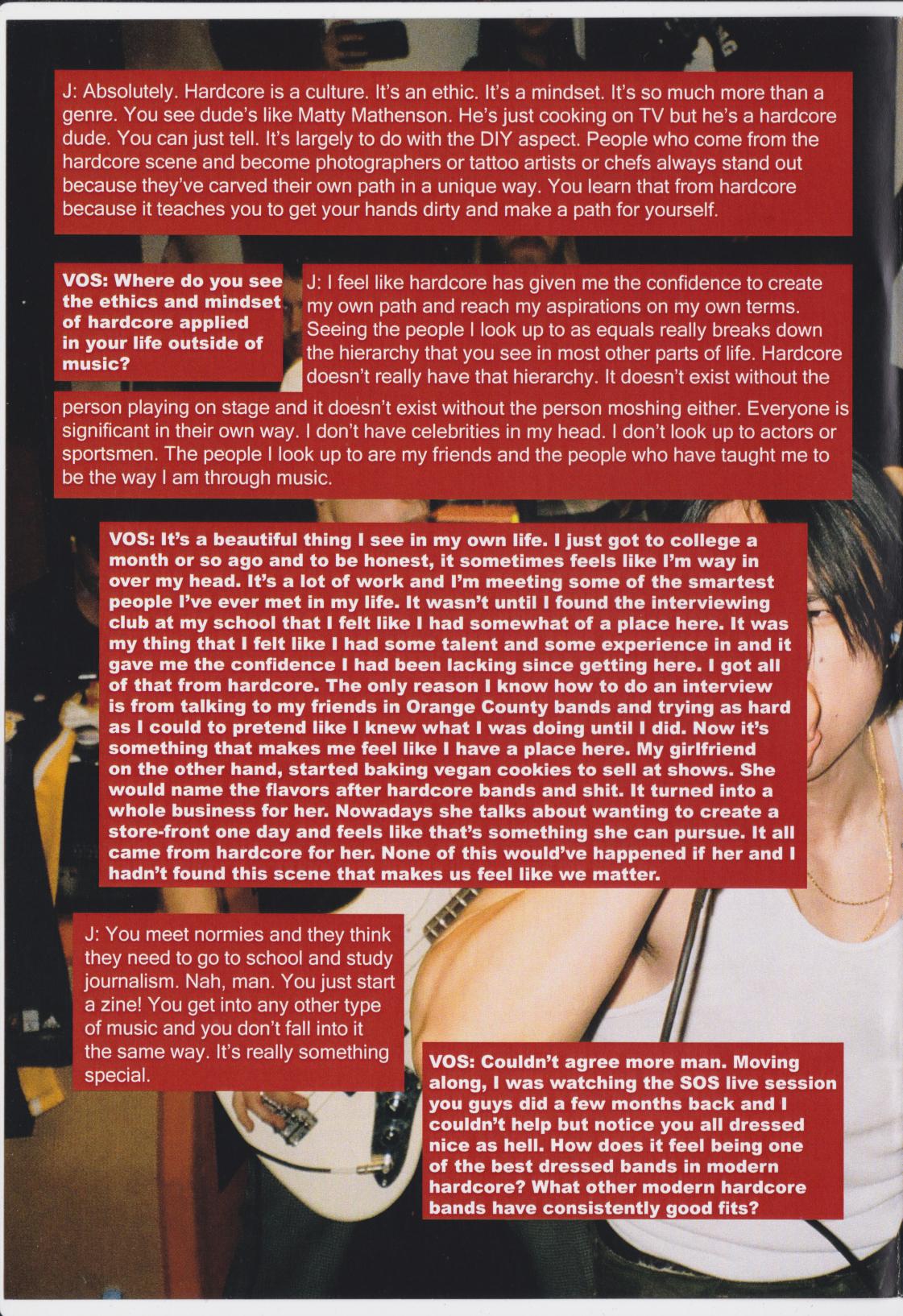
J: Thank you! That's who we are. We're not trying to go up on stage and say X Y Z to appease a certain moral standard that people wanna hear. This is just who we are. If you are confident and celebrate that, that confidence can be felt. Maybe it'll give someone confidence to do that themselves.

VOS: I think it's really cool. The idea that you being yourself so proudly could inspire some other kid to do the same is really special.

it, I can too!" As Asian kids, we were always told to be accountants and doctors and other stereotypical shit. Luckily, we've been able to break out of that mold and hopefully people can see a little bit of themselves in what we're doing.

J: That's the thing about hardcore: You see people that look like you on stage. They're normal people who are playing shows and touring and it's inspiring. Like hey "If he can do

VOS: I agree completely. Moving along, I understand you guys sometimes have played shows with hip-hop acts like Posseshot and Haz. I personally have always believed hardcore is more of an ethos and mindset than a strict sonic boundary that defines a genre. What do you think makes something or someone hardcore?



J: Absolutely. Hardcore is a culture. It's an ethic. It's a mindset. It's so much more than a genre. You see dude's like Matty Mathenson. He's just cooking on TV but he's a hardcore dude. You can just tell. It's largely to do with the DIY aspect. People who come from the hardcore scene and become photographers or tattoo artists or chefs always stand out because they've carved their own path in a unique way. You learn that from hardcore because it teaches you to get your hands dirty and make a path for yourself.

VOS: Where do you see the ethics and mindset of hardcore applied in your life outside of music?

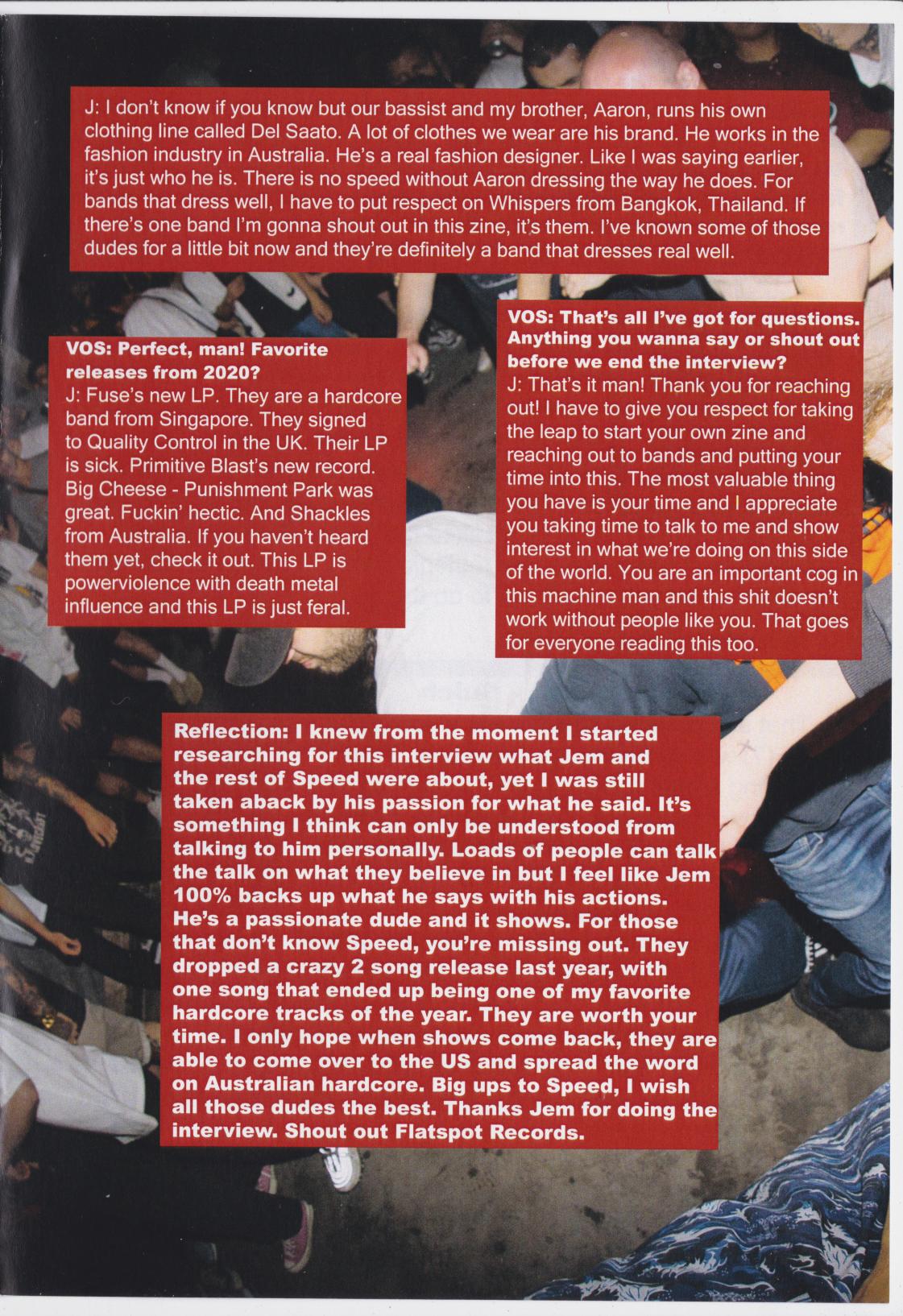
J: I feel like hardcore has given me the confidence to create my own path and reach my aspirations on my own terms. Seeing the people I look up to as equals really breaks down the hierarchy that you see in most other parts of life. Hardcore doesn't really have that hierarchy. It doesn't exist without the

person playing on stage and it doesn't exist without the person moshing either. Everyone is significant in their own way. I don't have celebrities in my head. I don't look up to actors or sportsmen. The people I look up to are my friends and the people who have taught me to be the way I am through music.

VOS: It's a beautiful thing I see in my own life. I just got to college a month or so ago and to be honest, it sometimes feels like I'm way in over my head. It's a lot of work and I'm meeting some of the smartest people I've ever met in my life. It wasn't until I found the interviewing club at my school that I felt like I had somewhat of a place here. It was my thing that I felt like I had some talent and some experience in and it gave me the confidence I had been lacking since getting here. I got all of that from hardcore. The only reason I know how to do an interview is from talking to my friends in Orange County bands and trying as hard as I could to pretend like I knew what I was doing until I did. Now it's something that makes me feel like I have a place here. My girlfriend on the other hand, started baking vegan cookies to sell at shows. She would name the flavors after hardcore bands and shit. It turned into a whole business for her. Nowadays she talks about wanting to create a store-front one day and feels like that's something she can pursue. It all came from hardcore for her. None of this would've happened if her and I hadn't found this scene that makes us feel like we matter.

J: You meet normies and they think they need to go to school and study journalism. Nah, man. You just start a zine! You get into any other type of music and you don't fall into it the same way. It's really something special.

VOS: Couldn't agree more man. Moving along, I was watching the SOS live session you guys did a few months back and I couldn't help but notice you all dressed nice as hell. How does it feel being one of the best dressed bands in modern hardcore? What other modern hardcore bands have consistently good fits?



J: I don't know if you know but our bassist and my brother, Aaron, runs his own clothing line called Del Saato. A lot of clothes we wear are his brand. He works in the fashion industry in Australia. He's a real fashion designer. Like I was saying earlier, it's just who he is. There is no speed without Aaron dressing the way he does. For bands that dress well, I have to put respect on Whispers from Bangkok, Thailand. If there's one band I'm gonna shout out in this zine, it's them. I've known some of those dudes for a little bit now and they're definitely a band that dresses real well.

VOS: Perfect, man! Favorite releases from 2020?

J: Fuse's new LP. They are a hardcore band from Singapore. They signed to Quality Control in the UK. Their LP is sick. Primitive Blast's new record. Big Cheese - Punishment Park was great. Fuckin' hectic. And Shackles from Australia. If you haven't heard them yet, check it out. This LP is powerviolence with death metal influence and this LP is just feral.

VOS: That's all I've got for questions. Anything you wanna say or shout out before we end the interview?

J: That's it man! Thank you for reaching out! I have to give you respect for taking the leap to start your own zine and reaching out to bands and putting your time into this. The most valuable thing you have is your time and I appreciate you taking time to talk to me and show interest in what we're doing on this side of the world. You are an important cog in this machine man and this shit doesn't work without people like you. That goes for everyone reading this too.

Reflection: I knew from the moment I started researching for this interview what Jem and the rest of Speed were about, yet I was still taken aback by his passion for what he said. It's something I think can only be understood from talking to him personally. Loads of people can talk the talk on what they believe in but I feel like Jem 100% backs up what he says with his actions. He's a passionate dude and it shows. For those that don't know Speed, you're missing out. They dropped a crazy 2 song release last year, with one song that ended up being one of my favorite hardcore tracks of the year. They are worth your time. I only hope when shows come back, they are able to come over to the US and spread the word on Australian hardcore. Big ups to Speed, I wish all those dudes the best. Thanks Jem for doing the interview. Shout out Flatspot Records.

Yoooo this is where I have my normie friends react to hardcore music. I totally stole this idea from @flubberzine on instagram. Go check them out. They do an AMAZING zine all on instagram. Anyway, for this issue I featured my college friends Anna and Wyatt. For reference Anna listens to indie music and some emo while Wyatt listens to jazz. Enjoy!



The Reach - One Step Closer

Anna: I really liked that! I would genuinely listen to that. The lyrics were really sad. They're very depressing. I don't know if I'd listen to hard hardcore yet but I'd listen to this.

Wyatt: Yeah that was really good. Made me feel like I was in some punk rock movie. The song was perfectly cinematic. I liked the lyrics. They were very existential. I really liked how melodic it was. It wasn't at all what I expected when you asked me to do this.

A: 

W: 

Flesh Pursuit - Gulch

A: That scared me a little bit. His voice/her voice (?) was terrifying in a good way. The beginning of this song was very unsettling in a good way. I really liked the beginning. I wanna know what his voice sounds like when he talks. He MUST have a super distinct voice. Do you scream, Evan? It's impressive.



W: Wooooaaaahhhh. His voice was so gutteral. I think a common theme is that all these songs start with guitars screeching and it almost feels like an atomic bomb hits when the drums come in. It's so weird coming from a world where lyrics are meant to be given beautifully. The lyrics here are good lyrics and they're so full but he's screaming them. It puts so much emphasis on the cadence rather than melody

A: 

W: 

David De La Hoz - The Chariot



A: It was like a poem. It was sung very rhythmically. I'm overwhelmed but it was good. I had a whole experience.
W: That was so difficult to follow. I felt like a lot of the time the vocals were in stark contrast with the instrumental. The talking section reminded me of much chiller music but it was loud and in your face. I am...very confused.

A:

W: Confused/5

Blackcurrant / Now They are Through With Me - Zulu

A: Jesus Christ. That was so cool. I really liked it. This is not what I thought hardcore was like. I figured it was a bunch of white dudes jumping around. The lyrics were so heavy. I was very shocked. I didn't know hardcore could be like this. The way all these hardcore bands you've shown us use poetic devices has been blowing my mind. I had no idea!!

W: Holy fuck! That was seriously one of the coolest pieces of music I've heard in a really long time. I think I have more questions than thoughts. What is the racial distribution in hardcore? When I think of hardcore being an overtly white domain, it could be problematic in that it's overglorifying problems that white men have. When you think of it as a platform for a multiracial community, it's a super powerful medium. The way it weaved in and out of musical styles was amazing. I love the lyrics. They did a lot of really cool poetic things. "Not just the white but blue and red" had me thinking "It's red white and blue, why'd they do that?" Obviously it's referring to white America and the police. At one point he says "blood and flesh" instead of "flesh and blood" to emphasize the blood. Crazy writing. This was my favorite one for sure



A:

W:

Bostons - Have Heart

A: The lyrics are so fucking raw. Jesus Christ. And I very much see the positive spin you always talk about behind hardcore. He's almost saying "Yes, my childhood was fucked up but look at this life I've made for myself now. Is this band straight edge? I wasn't really focused on the music too much because I was focusing on lyrics but the part where everything cut out REALLY hit hard. (Ps Anna wants me to mention she really likes Fiddlehead)

W: Woah. That was so deep. This dude is talking about his dad and his dad's dad right? *We argue about interpretations of the lyrics for a bit*. I definitely got more melodic vocals from this one and I loved it. It's super impressive writing but I don't think I'd listen to this on my own.

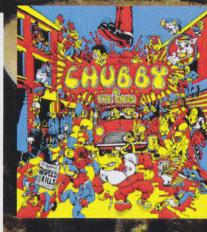
A:

W:

All Along the Uxbridge Road - Chubby and the Gang

A: I absolutely love that. 10/10. The album art is perfect. Please send this to me. It was just so happy. Was there a harmonica solo in there? This was definitely my favorite.

W: It reminds me of the King Gizzard album cover. That was so dope. It was upbeat and made me happy. I love the tambourines and shakers and all the extra percussion and stuff.

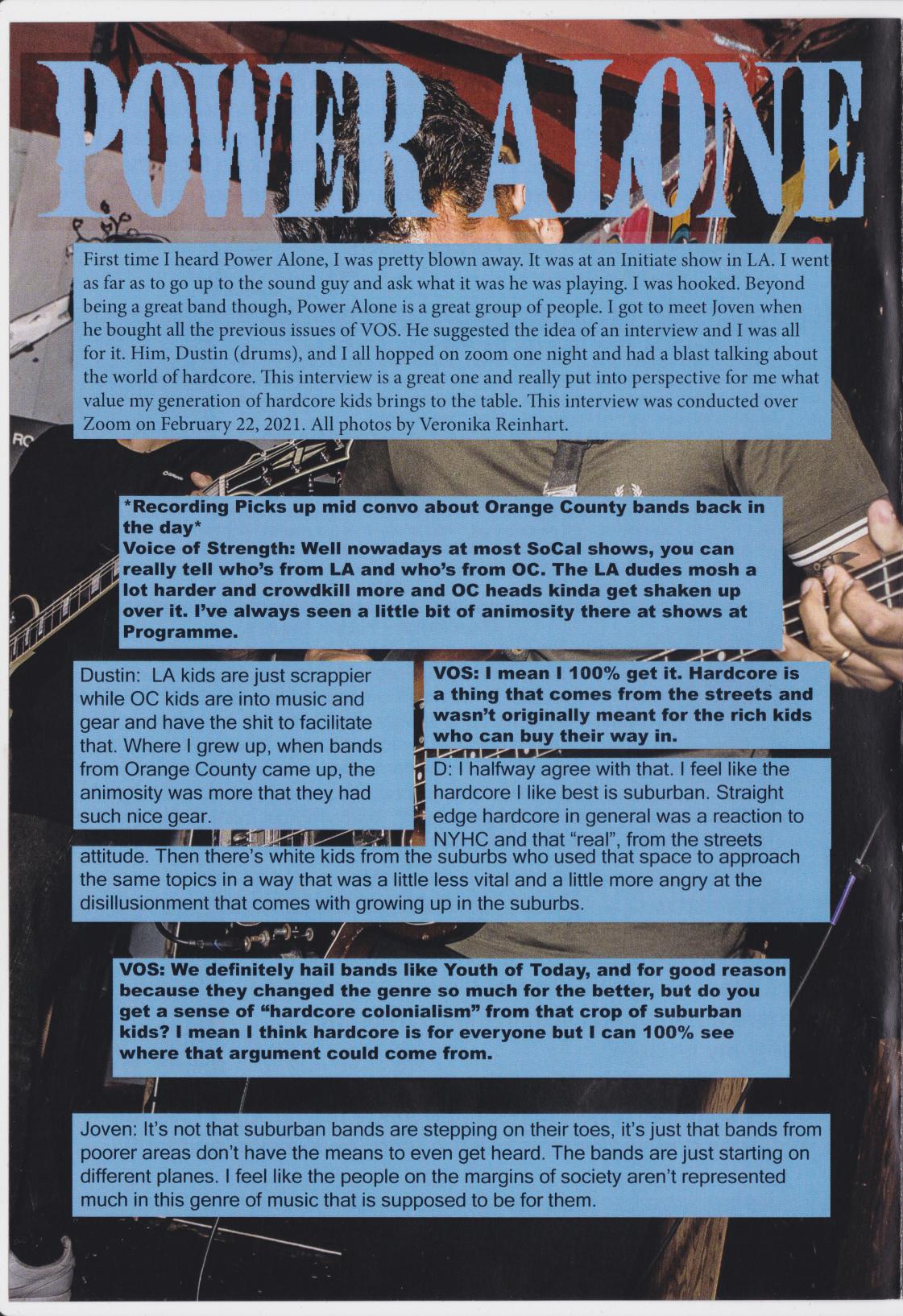


A:

W:



POWER ALONE



First time I heard Power Alone, I was pretty blown away. It was at an Initiate show in LA. I went as far as to go up to the sound guy and ask what it was he was playing. I was hooked. Beyond being a great band though, Power Alone is a great group of people. I got to meet Joven when he bought all the previous issues of VOS. He suggested the idea of an interview and I was all for it. Him, Dustin (drums), and I all hopped on zoom one night and had a blast talking about the world of hardcore. This interview is a great one and really put into perspective for me what value my generation of hardcore kids brings to the table. This interview was conducted over Zoom on February 22, 2021. All photos by Veronika Reinhart.

Recording Picks up mid convo about Orange County bands back in the day

Voice of Strength: Well nowadays at most SoCal shows, you can really tell who's from LA and who's from OC. The LA dudes mosh a lot harder and crowdkill more and OC heads kinda get shaken up over it. I've always seen a little bit of animosity there at shows at Programme.

Dustin: LA kids are just scrappier while OC kids are into music and gear and have the shit to facilitate that. Where I grew up, when bands from Orange County came up, the animosity was more that they had such nice gear.

attitude. Then there's white kids from the suburbs who used that space to approach the same topics in a way that was a little less vital and a little more angry at the disillusionment that comes with growing up in the suburbs.

VOS: I mean I 100% get it. Hardcore is a thing that comes from the streets and wasn't originally meant for the rich kids who can buy their way in.

D: I halfway agree with that. I feel like the hardcore I like best is suburban. Straight edge hardcore in general was a reaction to NYHC and that "real", from the streets attitude. Then there's white kids from the suburbs who used that space to approach the same topics in a way that was a little less vital and a little more angry at the disillusionment that comes with growing up in the suburbs.

VOS: We definitely hail bands like Youth of Today, and for good reason because they changed the genre so much for the better, but do you get a sense of "hardcore colonialism" from that crop of suburban kids? I mean I think hardcore is for everyone but I can 100% see where that argument could come from.

Joven: It's not that suburban bands are stepping on their toes, it's just that bands from poorer areas don't have the means to even get heard. The bands are just starting on different planes. I feel like the people on the margins of society aren't represented much in this genre of music that is supposed to be for them.

D: Like CroMags being actual homeless youth vs. kids like Youth of Today who see that happening from the suburbs and just enter. One crowd is singing about their lives while the other is singing about what they're learning in college. That's how one of my first bands was. I think it's just how it is.

J: And hardcore isn't like the part of the music industry where people are actively trying to find artists who will make them money. Everyone is kinda just holding themselves up.

D: I think one important thing for those bands who aren't able to get seen is to just stay together. All the bands that I played in that sucked never got any attention only played together for 2 years. I bet if we played for 3 more years, we would've gotten better in time and enough people would've seen us that they could've formed an opinion.

VOS: And that's the nature of the genre. Hardcore is built off of the younger generation. It's people who haven't been playing their instruments long, haven't been writing songs long, haven't been touring long. It makes perfect sense that they get better the longer they do those things!

D: Hardcore is the same music that someone like me, who got into hardcore around '97, has been hearing for forever now. These new kids come in and they just discovered it. To them it's the most vital shit in the whole world! You see Dare play and they're going the fuck off. It's one thing to write the music but when you don't have that fire, it's different.

VOS: I agree completely. I went to my first show in 2018 and this shit is all still new to me. It's exactly what you said. It's vital to me still. When I was looking at colleges, distance from a major hardcore scene was a serious consideration for where I was gonna go to school. This leads perfectly into one of my questions: We know from the lyrics of "Something Real" what you've held onto from your early days in hardcore but how has your view changed on the scene as you've grown older? Do you feel that your role and ways of contributing has/will change?

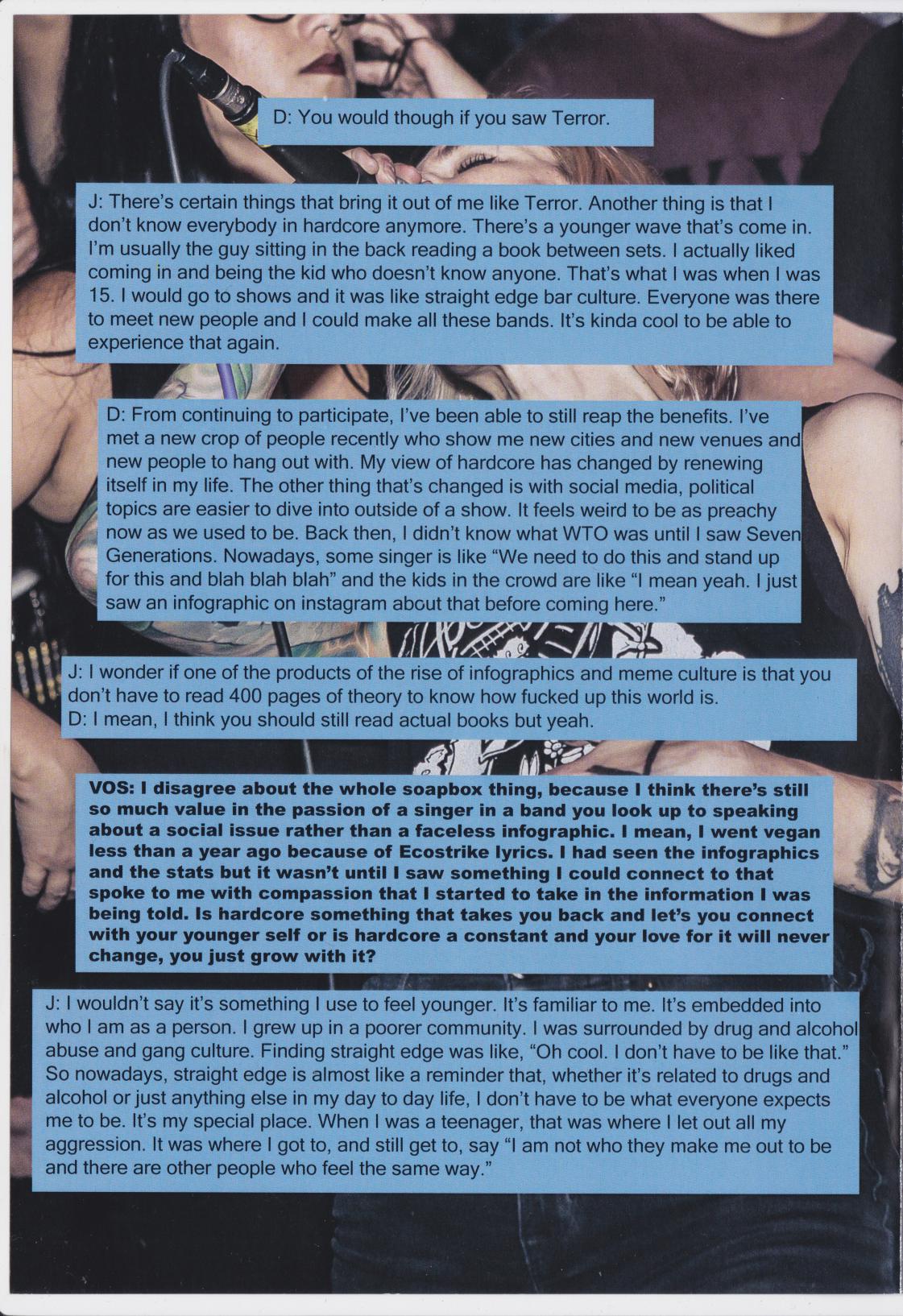
J: I did the same thing. When I decided I didn't wanna live in San Diego anymore, all my friends from hardcore were moving up here to go to SF state, UC Santa Cruz, or UC Berkley. I don't think we're old by any means. I'm 32...I mean Dustin, you're kinda old. When you said you found hardcore in '97-

D: No I claimed edge in '97

VOS: I wasn't even born yet

Group Laughs

J: Anyway back then, I was the one at the front. I was the one singing and dancing and playing in bands. That's how I met all my friends. I have so many friends who do so many other things these days. They play shoegaze music, they work at an architecture firm, or some shit like that. No matter what they're doing though, there's this base layer we all have and that's that we all come from straight edge and hardcore. I'm probably a rarity in my immediate friend group because I still listen to hardcore and go to shows. I'm probably not the guy drop kicking off the speaker though.



D: You would though if you saw Terror.

J: There's certain things that bring it out of me like Terror. Another thing is that I don't know everybody in hardcore anymore. There's a younger wave that's come in. I'm usually the guy sitting in the back reading a book between sets. I actually liked coming in and being the kid who doesn't know anyone. That's what I was when I was 15. I would go to shows and it was like straight edge bar culture. Everyone was there to meet new people and I could make all these bands. It's kinda cool to be able to experience that again.

D: From continuing to participate, I've been able to still reap the benefits. I've met a new crop of people recently who show me new cities and new venues and new people to hang out with. My view of hardcore has changed by renewing itself in my life. The other thing that's changed is with social media, political topics are easier to dive into outside of a show. It feels weird to be as preachy now as we used to be. Back then, I didn't know what WTO was until I saw Seven Generations. Nowadays, some singer is like "We need to do this and stand up for this and blah blah blah" and the kids in the crowd are like "I mean yeah. I just saw an infographic on instagram about that before coming here."

J: I wonder if one of the products of the rise of infographics and meme culture is that you don't have to read 400 pages of theory to know how fucked up this world is.

D: I mean, I think you should still read actual books but yeah.

VOS: I disagree about the whole soapbox thing, because I think there's still so much value in the passion of a singer in a band you look up to speaking about a social issue rather than a faceless infographic. I mean, I went vegan less than a year ago because of Ecostrike lyrics. I had seen the infographics and the stats but it wasn't until I saw something I could connect to that spoke to me with compassion that I started to take in the information I was being told. Is hardcore something that takes you back and lets you connect with your younger self or is hardcore a constant and your love for it will never change, you just grow with it?

J: I wouldn't say it's something I use to feel younger. It's familiar to me. It's embedded into who I am as a person. I grew up in a poorer community. I was surrounded by drug and alcohol abuse and gang culture. Finding straight edge was like, "Oh cool. I don't have to be like that." So nowadays, straight edge is almost like a reminder that, whether it's related to drugs and alcohol or just anything else in my day to day life, I don't have to be what everyone expects me to be. It's my special place. When I was a teenager, that was where I let out all my aggression. It was where I got to, and still get to, say "I am not who they make me out to be and there are other people who feel the same way."

D: I also grew up in a poorer neighborhood with a lot of drugs around. The impact of discovering this community that isn't like a top-down community was very special to me. It's not like a church event where they organize it for you and you drive out and watch. Hardcore was a bunch of kids making a vow to never ever drink on their own and throwing shows around that all on their own. The idea that kids could make that decision and do all that on their own was so profound to me. It was a much needed structure for me. I poured myself into that completely. I was all-in. Along the way there are so many incentives to let all that shit go. Hardcore has these cycles of popularity. The one we're in currently, which is dope as fuck and it only really kicked off around 2018. When Knocked Loose came around and all these other bands that sound hard as fuck came around, it made me feel validated again. I'm so grateful I can go to these shows and feel in my element. That's kinda how Power Alone came to be. We looked at each other and were like "There's a moment made for us!" The combination of chugs being big again and Trump being president felt very similar to when Gather started and Bush was in office.

VOS: You guys bring a political edge to straight edge music that a lot of bands these days seem to lack. Do you see yourselves as filling a void or is straight edge inherently political? Who do you see as the leaders and strongest speakers of the movement?

D: There are people who have a genuine interest in influencing things for the better. That includes us and that includes my sister Eva, who sings for the band. I think people are thirsty for some clarity and validation around these topics. When Gather started, we were in a super emotional phase of hardcore. Bands like poison the well, 18 visions, and converge were singing about themselves as a reaction to the super militant political stuff from the 90s.

J: It's funny that you say that about the political aspect. When Eva was starting to write lyrics, she mentioned that she wanted this to be LESS political and more personal than previous bands she had been in. Those were all based on world politics. These songs are all just about how she's feeling. That just speaks to the political nature of straight edge.

D: Eva tries to write a personal record and it ends up political because her life is political. She goes home from work and cracks open some theory. Something that's personal to her is expressing her frustrations with the state of things right now. In terms of who's carrying the torch of political straight edge...I don't know. I think nowadays there's a lot more people who are straight edge than there are people who are proud to be straight edge, so any band who wears that on their sleeve can lead the movement in my opinion. In terms of just political stuff, I think Zulu is doing it well.

J: I think Magnitude is leading the charge on political straight edge hardcore. That LDB set was absolutely crazy.

D: Yeah I saw Magnitude at the California Takeover Earth Crisis show and I was taken aback by them. I saw they were doing the "Straight Edge isn't cool anymore...So What?" rip and that made me laugh. The fact that there's another wave of kids calling back to the 90s now blows my mind because my band in 2006 was doing that! I have to wonder how that lands with kids nowadays.

VOS: I can answer that for you.

J: Can I take a shot at this? I think it's because in terms of what's fucked about this world, nothings changed. What Earth Crisis was talking about in the 90s, Ecostrike still talks about today.

VOS: You phrased it perfectly. They have the same spirit as those older bands and that's what keeps hardcore alive. There's a reason that the messages and the sounds that were expressed by bands 40 years ago are still being talked about and emulated today. It's because of the validity of those messages. Nothing has changed. Do you see any issue with the fact that hardcore has stayed so true to its roots?

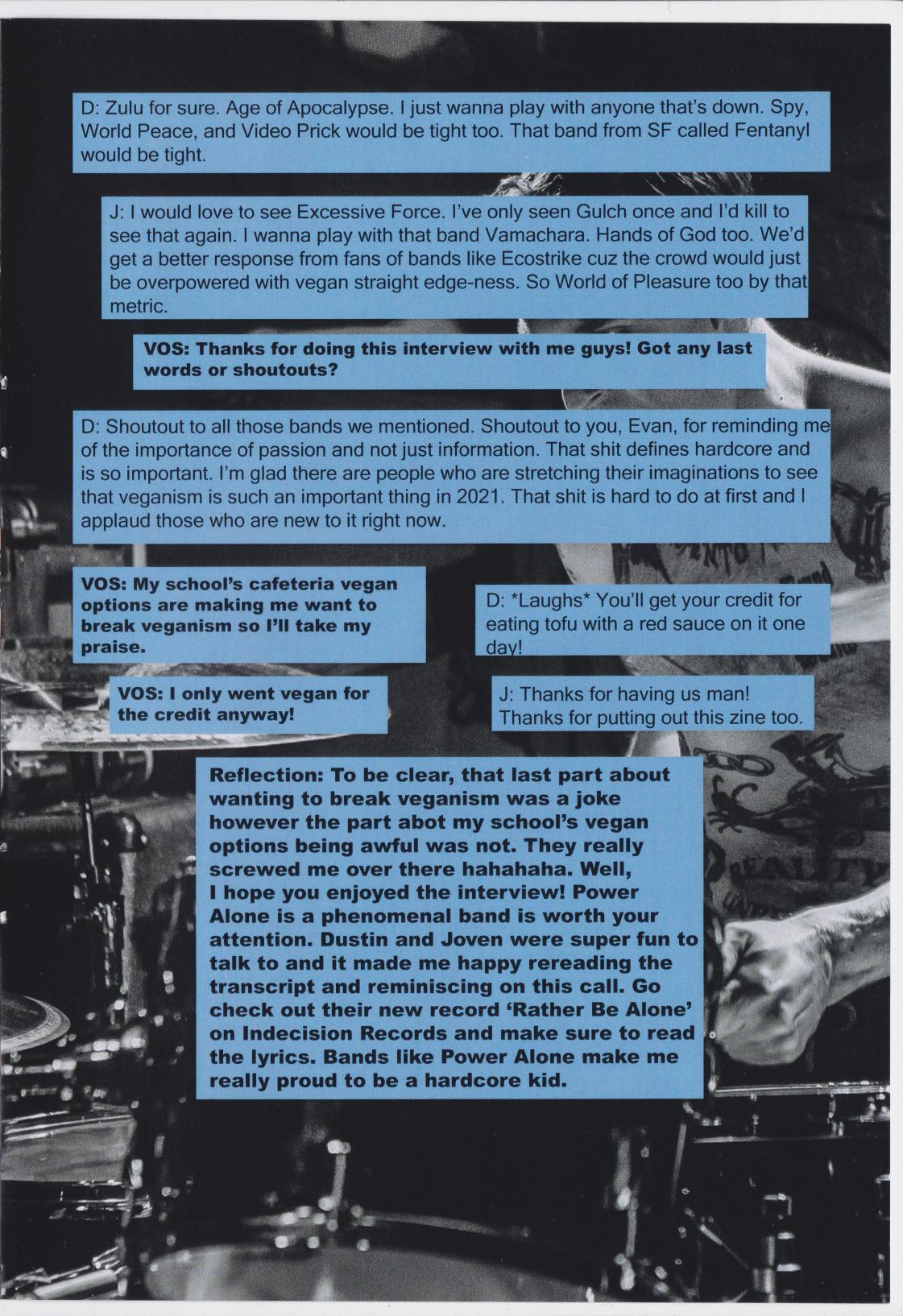
J: The amount of vegans from 2015-2018 had tripled. That's crazy. That's 20 years after Earth Crisis. That's 20 years after when we were going wild with militant vegan rage. We made a joke that was like "So we really did nothing?" We didn't change what was going on. But that could also be because everythings gotten worse and now things like veganism are more vital.

VOS: I think as the torch has been passed, the older generations have also passed down the shitty situations that we sing about. I see a lot of animosity within my generation for the Baby Boomers for leaving our generation with so much shit that they caused that they don't have to deal with like global warming. As we've been handed these genres to do what we please with, we've also been handed a lot more bullshit along with it to write about. That says a lot about how you could define each generation of hardcore. Maybe the 90s bands brought the political issues to the public's attention but my generation had to deal with a lot of bullshit that will be reflected lyrically in time. I got a few short answer questions for y'all and then I'll let ya get back to your night. Do you guys have any favorite records from 2020?

D: Age of Apocalypse record was crazy. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The music is like straight out of a One King Down record and I love weird vocals so it's right up my alley. Service Weapon by SPY is the epitome of "give the people what they want." It came up in 2019 but I listened to the Luster full length all year. It's old Orange County hardcore and metal dudes who play shoegaze now.

J: That new Softkill record blew my mind. Of course Zulu's record. SPY for sure. That band Punitive Damage is fucking good. Not hardcore but the Unritoeus Brothers project is super good. If you wanna cry that shit is great. Also that World of Pleasure demo blew me away.

VOS: What is your dream show lineup that Power Alone could play? Any bands are fair game.



D: Zulu for sure. Age of Apocalypse. I just wanna play with anyone that's down. Spy, World Peace, and Video Prick would be tight too. That band from SF called Fentanyl would be tight.

J: I would love to see Excessive Force. I've only seen Gulch once and I'd kill to see that again. I wanna play with that band Vamachara. Hands of God too. We'd get a better response from fans of bands like Ecostrike cuz the crowd would just be overpowered with vegan straight edge-ness. So World of Pleasure too by that metric.

VOS: Thanks for doing this interview with me guys! Got any last words or shoutouts?

D: Shoutout to all those bands we mentioned. Shoutout to you, Evan, for reminding me of the importance of passion and not just information. That shit defines hardcore and is so important. I'm glad there are people who are stretching their imaginations to see that veganism is such an important thing in 2021. That shit is hard to do at first and I applaud those who are new to it right now.

VOS: My school's cafeteria vegan options are making me want to break veganism so I'll take my praise.

VOS: I only went vegan for the credit anyway!

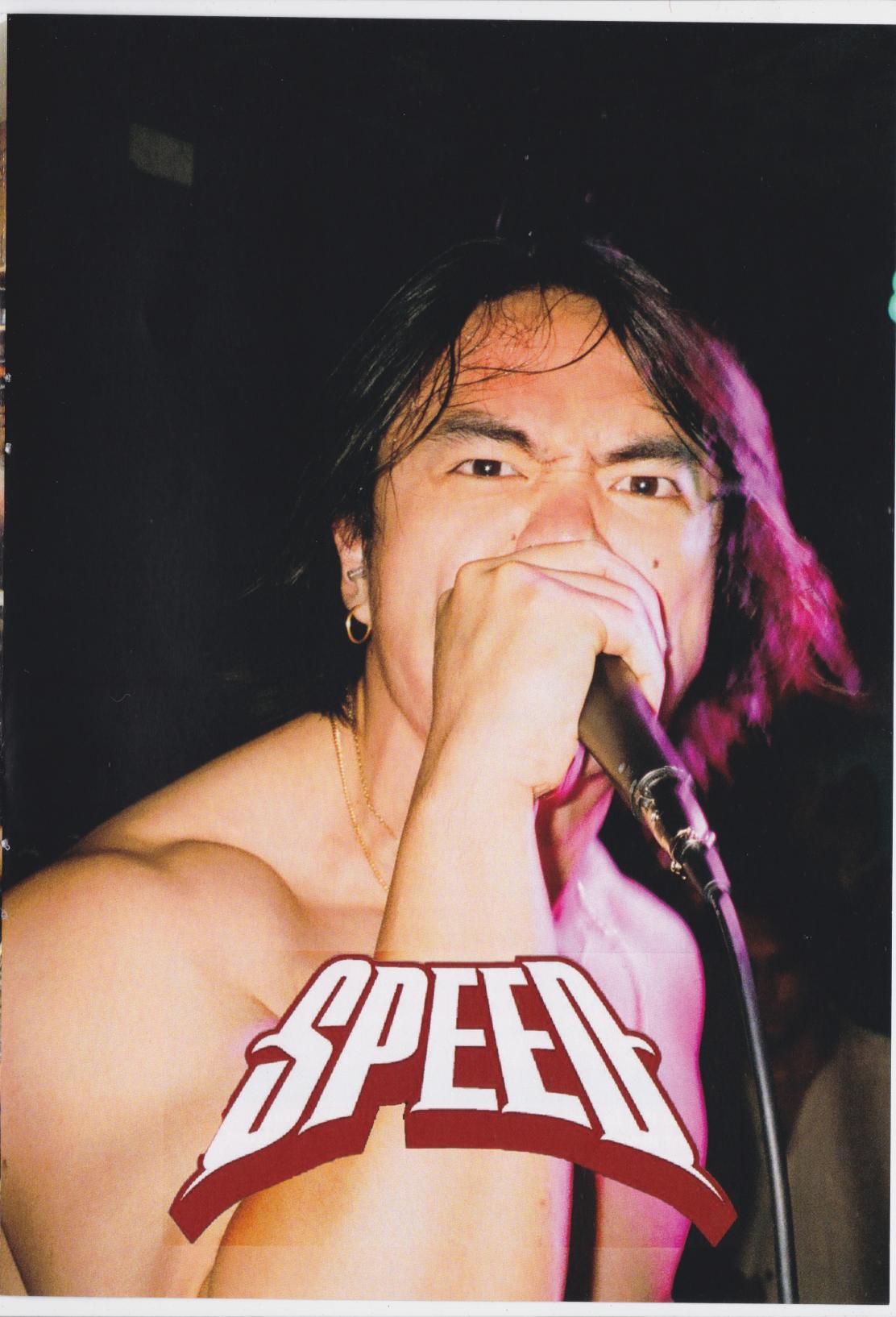
D: *Laughs* You'll get your credit for eating tofu with a red sauce on it one day!

J: Thanks for having us man! Thanks for putting out this zine too.

Reflection: To be clear, that last part about wanting to break veganism was a joke however the part about my school's vegan options being awful was not. They really screwed me over there hahahaha. Well, I hope you enjoyed the interview! Power Alone is a phenomenal band is worth your attention. Dustin and Joven were super fun to talk to and it made me happy rereading the transcript and reminiscing on this call. Go check out their new record 'Rather Be Alone' on Indecision Records and make sure to read the lyrics. Bands like Power Alone make me really proud to be a hardcore kid.

INITIATE





SPEED

DRAIN

Drain needs no introduction. California Cursed was one of the biggest releases from 2020 and for good reason. Drain consistently has had some of the craziest shows, best riffs, and most unique aesthetics throughout their time in the spotlight. I had the wonderful pleasure of chatting with Sammy Ciaramitaro about all things hardcore. For those who don't know Drain, Sammy is not only one of the most californian people I know (and I grew up in Southern California), but he is also one of the friendliest people in the entire scene. His charisma is undeniable and you can feel his smile through the phone. I'm very glad I got to do this interview, so enjoy. This interview was conducted over a phone call on March 7th. All photos by Gabe Becarra.

S: Sammy: So have we actually met yet in person?

Voice of Strength: We met at For the Children in 2019. Jay Morris is a good friend of mine and he introduced my dad and me since y'all were talking that night. You and my dad actually ended up talking for like half an hour that night.

S: I do remember that actually. That's wild.

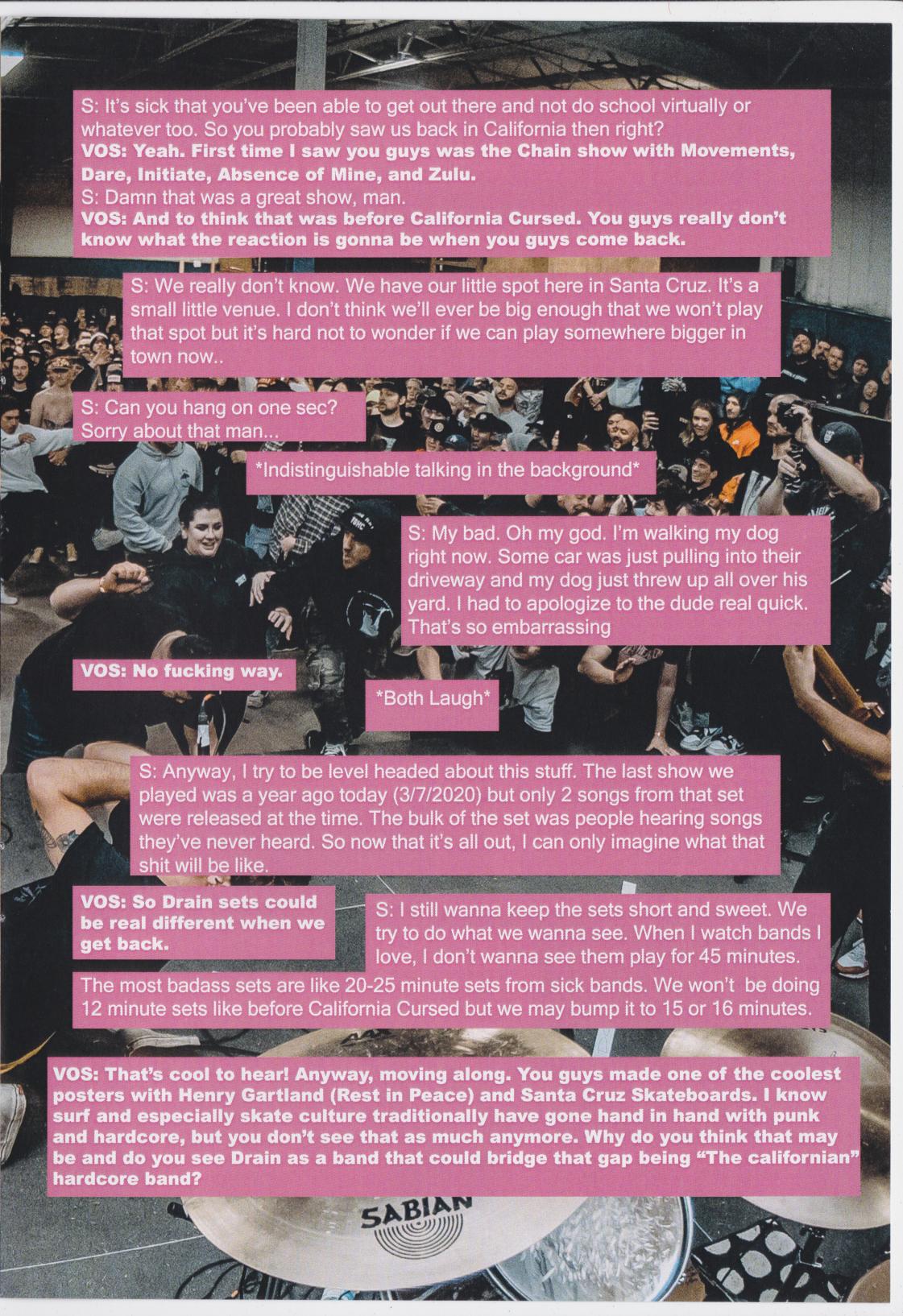
VOS: I wanted to ask where that friendly part of you comes from? Can you point to a moment in your life that made you realize you like liking people?

S: I really think it's from my folks. My dad runs a business and seeing my dad interacting with customers taught me how to meet people. My mom is super social too. When I was a little kid, we'd drive around San Pedro and my family was honking and saying hi to all these people. We knew everyone and it made life a lot more fun.

VOS: Is your whole family like that then? Is all of San Pedro like that?

S: My folks are pretty social but my dad's got a hothead and I've noticed that a bit in myself. I'm not as nice as I get credit for sometimes. I mean, I don't mind it but sometimes I get annoyed and I don't wanna JUST be nice. It does bother me from time to time. As I've gotten older I've definitely needed to learn how to make boundaries cuz for a lot of my life I was trying to be a people pleaser. San Pedro though is definitely a working class town. I don't think it's super social honestly. It was more when I moved to Santa Cruz that I fit in in that way. Santa Cruz is super laid back and it made it easier to be laid back with everyone. Imma hit you now. Where are you at right now? You mentioned New England?

VOS: I'm in Providence, Rhode Island for college right now and it is one hell of a culture shock from Southern California.



S: It's sick that you've been able to get out there and not do school virtually or whatever too. So you probably saw us back in California then right?

VOS: Yeah. First time I saw you guys was the Chain show with Movements, Dare, Initiate, Absence of Mine, and Zulu.

S: Damn that was a great show, man.

VOS: And to think that was before California Cursed. You guys really don't know what the reaction is gonna be when you guys come back.

S: We really don't know. We have our little spot here in Santa Cruz. It's a small little venue. I don't think we'll ever be big enough that we won't play that spot but it's hard not to wonder if we can play somewhere bigger in town now..

S: Can you hang on one sec?
Sorry about that man...

Indistinguishable talking in the background

S: My bad. Oh my god. I'm walking my dog right now. Some car was just pulling into their driveway and my dog just threw up all over his yard. I had to apologize to the dude real quick. That's so embarrassing

VOS: No fucking way.

Both Laugh

S: Anyway, I try to be level headed about this stuff. The last show we played was a year ago today (3/7/2020) but only 2 songs from that set were released at the time. The bulk of the set was people hearing songs they've never heard. So now that it's all out, I can only imagine what that shit will be like.

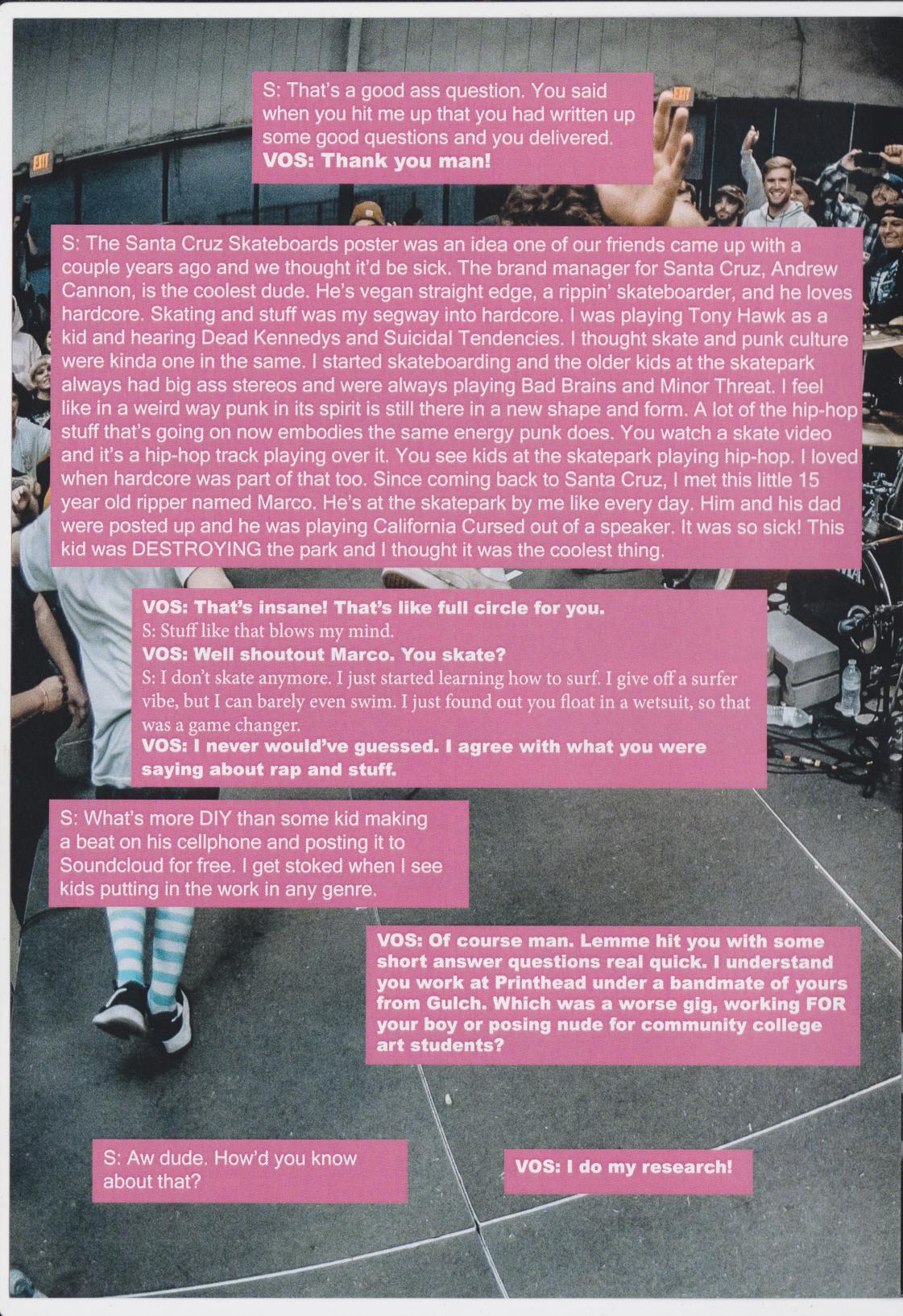
VOS: So Drain sets could be real different when we get back.

S: I still wanna keep the sets short and sweet. We try to do what we wanna see. When I watch bands I love, I don't wanna see them play for 45 minutes.

The most badass sets are like 20-25 minute sets from sick bands. We won't be doing 12 minute sets like before California Cursed but we may bump it to 15 or 16 minutes.

VOS: That's cool to hear! Anyway, moving along. You guys made one of the coolest posters with Henry Gartland (Rest in Peace) and Santa Cruz Skateboards. I know surf and especially skate culture traditionally have gone hand in hand with punk and hardcore, but you don't see that as much anymore. Why do you think that may be and do you see Drain as a band that could bridge that gap being "The californian" hardcore band?

SABIAN



S: That's a good ass question. You said when you hit me up that you had written up some good questions and you delivered.

VOS: Thank you man!

S: The Santa Cruz Skateboards poster was an idea one of our friends came up with a couple years ago and we thought it'd be sick. The brand manager for Santa Cruz, Andrew Cannon, is the coolest dude. He's vegan straight edge, a rippin' skateboarder, and he loves hardcore. Skating and stuff was my segway into hardcore. I was playing Tony Hawk as a kid and hearing Dead Kennedys and Suicidal Tendencies. I thought skate and punk culture were kinda one in the same. I started skateboarding and the older kids at the skatepark always had big ass stereos and were always playing Bad Brains and Minor Threat. I feel like in a weird way punk in its spirit is still there in a new shape and form. A lot of the hip-hop stuff that's going on now embodies the same energy punk does. You watch a skate video and it's a hip-hop track playing over it. You see kids at the skatepark playing hip-hop. I loved when hardcore was part of that too. Since coming back to Santa Cruz, I met this little 15 year old ripper named Marco. He's at the skatepark by me like every day. Him and his dad were posted up and he was playing California Cursed out of a speaker. It was so sick! This kid was DESTROYING the park and I thought it was the coolest thing.

VOS: That's insane! That's like full circle for you.

S: Stuff like that blows my mind.

VOS: Well shoutout Marco. You skate?

S: I don't skate anymore. I just started learning how to surf. I give off a surfer vibe, but I can barely even swim. I just found out you float in a wetsuit, so that was a game changer.

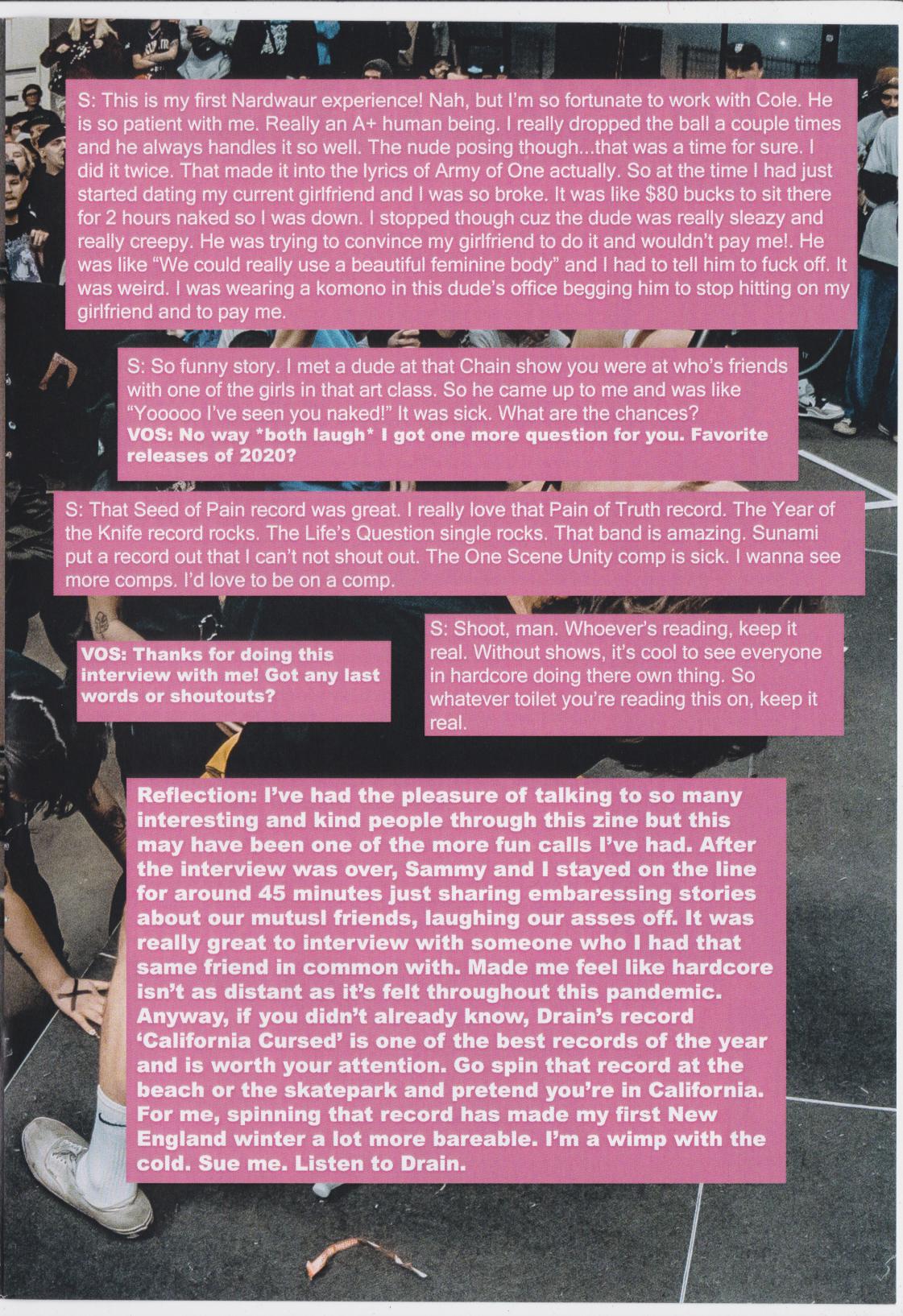
VOS: I never would've guessed. I agree with what you were saying about rap and stuff.

S: What's more DIY than some kid making a beat on his cellphone and posting it to Soundcloud for free. I get stoked when I see kids putting in the work in any genre.

VOS: Of course man. Lemme hit you with some short answer questions real quick. I understand you work at Printhead under a bandmate of yours from Gulch. Which was a worse gig, working FOR your boy or posing nude for community college art students?

S: Aw dude. How'd you know about that?

VOS: I do my research!



S: This is my first Nardwuar experience! Nah, but I'm so fortunate to work with Cole. He is so patient with me. Really an A+ human being. I really dropped the ball a couple times and he always handles it so well. The nude posing though...that was a time for sure. I did it twice. That made it into the lyrics of Army of One actually. So at the time I had just started dating my current girlfriend and I was so broke. It was like \$80 bucks to sit there for 2 hours naked so I was down. I stopped though cuz the dude was really sleazy and really creepy. He was trying to convince my girlfriend to do it and wouldn't pay me! He was like "We could really use a beautiful feminine body" and I had to tell him to fuck off. It was weird. I was wearing a komono in this dude's office begging him to stop hitting on my girlfriend and to pay me.

S: So funny story. I met a dude at that Chain show you were at who's friends with one of the girls in that art class. So he came up to me and was like "Yooooo I've seen you naked!" It was sick. What are the chances?

VOS: No way *both laugh* I got one more question for you. Favorite releases of 2020?

S: That Seed of Pain record was great. I really love that Pain of Truth record. The Year of the Knife record rocks. The Life's Question single rocks. That band is amazing. Sunami put a record out that I can't not shout out. The One Scene Unity comp is sick. I wanna see more comps. I'd love to be on a comp.

VOS: Thanks for doing this interview with me! Got any last words or shoutouts?

S: Shoot, man. Whoever's reading, keep it real. Without shows, it's cool to see everyone in hardcore doing their own thing. So whatever toilet you're reading this on, keep it real.

Reflection: I've had the pleasure of talking to so many interesting and kind people through this zine but this may have been one of the more fun calls I've had. After the interview was over, Sammy and I stayed on the line for around 45 minutes just sharing embarrassing stories about our mutual friends, laughing our asses off. It was really great to interview with someone who I had that same friend in common with. Made me feel like hardcore isn't as distant as it's felt throughout this pandemic. Anyway, if you didn't already know, Drain's record 'California Cursed' is one of the best records of the year and is worth your attention. Go spin that record at the beach or the skatepark and pretend you're in California. For me, spinning that record has made my first New England winter a lot more bearable. I'm a wimp with the cold. Sue me. Listen to Drain.

My Favorite Hardcore

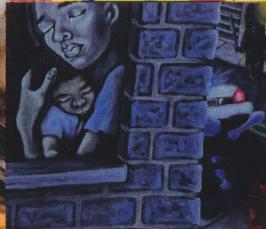
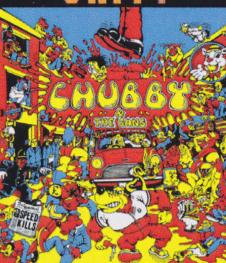
DRAIN



ONE SCENE



UNITY



California Cursed - Drain

Drain's California Cursed is without a doubt my hardcore album of the year. I said it the day it came out and I'm standing by it now. There are very few albums of which I am absolutely certain we will look back on in 10+ years and say were classics but this is absolutely one of them. From blistering quick attack of Sick One to the insane thrash-like riffing on Feel the Pressure, this thing fucking rocks. With Drain signing to Revelation Records it seems that we're in for the long haul with these guys and I couldn't be more stoked for it. California Hardcore on top, baby!!!!!!

One Scene Unity Compilation - From Within Records

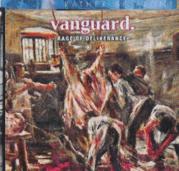
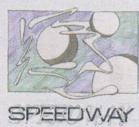
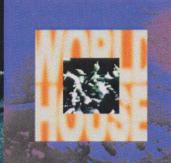
This compilation blew my mind in so many ways. First of all, most of the bands on this compilation were bands I had never heard of or hadn't liked particularly on first listen. After this compilation, all those bands were in my heavy rotation and ended up as year end favorites. Another notable thing about this comp is the way in which Carter and From Within stepped up to the plate. A label that wasn't on my radar prior to this release is now dominating hardcore and I'm here for it. The Itch is still the best track on the comp and you can fight me on that. OSU 2 coming soon!

Speed Kills - Chubby and the Gang

Chubby and the Gang rule, ok? I'll admit it, I slept hard on this album at first. My mistake. This album is addictive! Chubby and the Gang take a shot at punk style hardcore in a refreshing way. Rather than drawing from youth crew bands of the 80s, Chubby and the Gang draw more from punk acts like the Ramones. This thing seriously sounds like if the Ramones were a hardcore band and it's sick. This band kills it on record, in the social media game, and with the aesthetics. When they come to the US I will be running like a chicken with its head cut off. Trust me.

My People...Hold On - Zulu

My People...Hold On is without a doubt the best EP of the year and easily the most important hardcore release of the year. As much as I love every other record on this list, nothing is more topical, crucial, and transcendental of the genre as this record. Anaiah is great at conveying hugely salient messages into short songs coupled with expert sampling. Zulu put on some of the best shows pre-pandemic and I have no doubt that'll continue afterwards. Shout out Anaiah. Shoutout Braxton. Shoutout Zulu 100x over.



BROKEN VOW

reRecords of 2020

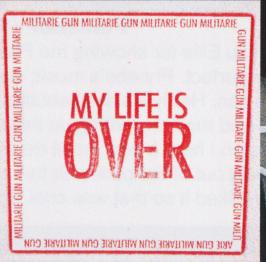
The Fire Rages On - Burning Strong

What a great record, man. Burning Strong was a band I had never heard of before this record. Shoutout to Ben Hughes for showing me this. This band has soaring melodic parts on par with the genres best and is wonderful lyrically. My hardcore hidden gem of the year! If you're sleeping, stop.



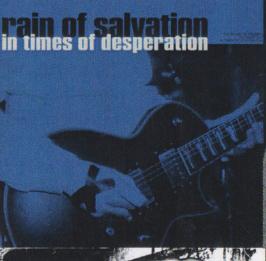
My Life is Over - Militarie Gun

Okay okay. I know this isn't really a hardcore record. I just felt it fit better on this list than the other. So if it's not hardcore, then what is it? It's not pop punk. It's not post punk or punk. Militarie Gun is Militarie Gun. Plain and simple. Catchy and melodic but also visceral and intense. "Hardcore" your parents might not hate.



In Times of Desperation - Rain of Salvation

Another record I was not anticipating to like as much as I did. Though I enjoyed ROS's previous EP, it didn't scratch the itch I needed it to. However with this EP, ROS have really come through. I believe this release puts them on the same tier as all the best modern straight edge bands. The ending to October Sky is RIDICULOUS. I love this EP so much.



Promo 2020 - Centra

If you follow me on social media or know me in real life you're probably sick of hearing about this band. Centra is all youth from Jakarta, Indonesia and they fucking CRUSHED this Promo. If you care about DIY culture, check out what this band is doing. I can't get enough of it.



Standout Tracks:

Garden - Glean (My song of the year)
Lead to Gray - One Step Closer
To Suffer - Vanguard
Linyhc - Pain of Truth
A Dumb Dog Gets Flogged - SPEED
Now They are Through With Me - Zulu
Myopia - Initiate
Sick One - Drain
The Itch - Youth Collapse
A New Low... - Militarie Gun
Where I was From - Mil-Spec
Bliss Out - Drug Church
October Sky - Rain of Salvation
Domination - World of Pleasure
Never Be the Same - Centra
Reaper - Rotting Out
Breaking Point - Burning Strong
A Better Way - Ecostrike
Numb - Chamber
Out Front - Life Force
All Along... - Chubby and the Gang
Shattered Hearts - Take it to Heart
Hardhead - End It
Buggin Out - Buggin
Forced Out of Heaven - Kharma
Keep Your Distance - Last Straw
Insecure - Insecure
Broke - Life's Question
Swingin Swords... - Mindforce
Fucking Towards Salvation - Gulch
Pressure Points - Lurk
YAB - Sunami
Can't Hide Forever - Gridiron
Bad Dogs Bite - Friction
Innate Thirst - Dying Wish
Intro - Degenerationxxx
Killing Me - Killing Me



TAKE IT TO HEART
THE BRIGHTER SIDE

My Favorite Non-Hard



How I'm Feeling Now - Charli XCX

HIFN is without a doubt my AOTY. No question. This album hasn't come off repeat for me since I found it. I genuinely feel this album is near perfect. Forever and Anthems are without a doubt my favorite songs about the quarantine. The instrumentals to 7 years give me chills and the bassline in the bridge of c2.0 makes me smile without fail every time. If I feel like shit when I wake up, I play this album and my mood instantly changes. Whether you like hyperpop or not, I highly recommend you give this record a shot.



Punisher - Phoebe Bridgers

Thank you Ellie for showing me Phoebe Bridgers. Another album that I see as near perfect. Phoebe's music makes me emotional in a way few other albums can. Her lyrics are beautiful. Her instrumentals are incredibly well crafted and the songwriting on this record blows my mind every time I listen. Each listen I hear a new small detail I never noticed before. Phoebe really knocked it out of the park with this one. Plus I was cooking to this once and my mom liked it so that was cool. Shoutout Ellie and shoutout Mom.



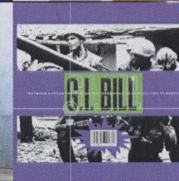
You'll Be Fine - Hot Mulligan

It's rare that a pop punk/emo record hits me the way the genre used to when I was younger. With the lack of good new bands and the constant exposed abusers, I kinda became disillusioned to the scene. You'll Be Fine is probably some of the best material the genre has seen since the glory days. Tracks like "Equips Sunglasses" are standout bops that put a sad, cataclysmic yet fun twist on the traditional sound. Maybe some of y'all hate this stuff but it was important to my musical development and I have no shame saying Hot Mulligan fucking killed it on this one.



Shore - Fleet Foxes

Fleet Foxes is one of my all time favorite bands and as usual, they delivered. My first time listening to this record was driving on a road trip with one of my best friends, Rowan. We had been driving through the Nevada desert for a few hours at that point in the pitch black. Suddenly, we hit the edge of Las Vegas. We put Shore on and it was life changing. Having the album explode with beautiful vocal harmonies as drove through the neon lit highway passing the Vegas strip was an experience I will never forget. Not to mention tracks like Can I Believe You are among the band's best.



core Records of 2020

Rat's Nest // Out There - D.C.R. Pollock & Derek Ted

Some may call me bias for this one because I'm good friends with D.C.R. but this little split is easily my favorite nonhardcore short form release. Both songs are beautifully blissful and will make you cry and smile at the same time. There, I shouted out your music David. Now pay me.



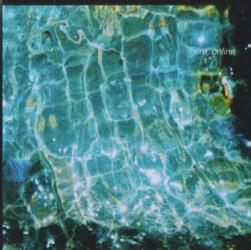
Zeroes - Declan Mckenna

Zeroes is a cool fucking album. I struggle to describe it to people. It is a rock album, with clear influences from classic rock and britpop but uses sounds and emits feelings none of that stuff really was ever able to do. Eventually, Darling is an incredible track and the rest of the album holds up. Netflix original series type beat.



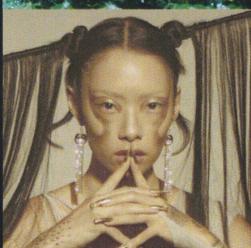
Here, Online - Worst Party Ever

I guess you could call this EP pop emo? It sounds like a standard emo album but has quality production and pop-like choruses that make it stand out from the pack. What About You? sounds like emo Wallows and False Teeth gets stuck in my head at least once a month. If you're bored of emo, check this out.



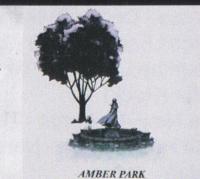
Sawayama - Rina Sawayama

Sawayama is a wild first listen. Rina executes lush early 2000s inspired pop mixed with nu metal. XS is a perfect pop track and reminds me of the best from the era it references. Who's Gonna Save You Now deserves to be heard on the big stage and it looks like that's where Rina is heading. Shoutout to my music theory Professor Mr. Ivan for showing me this.



Standout Tracks:

Thos Moser - Food House
c2.0 - Charli XCX
Figure Eight - Trophy Eyes
Talkin Johnny and June - Field Medic & Pickleboy
Out There - Derek Ted
Rat's Nest - D.C.R. Pollock
Head Change - Modern Color
I Know the End - Phoebe Bridgers
Window - Carly Rae Jepson
Ringtone (Charli XCX Remix) - 100 Gecs
XS - Rina Sawayama
Can I Believe You - Fleet Foxes
Equips Sunglasses - Hot Mulligan
Lithgow - GI BILL
Sick - Glaive
Someday I Will Lose You - Mat Kerekes
NEVER MET! - Cmten
Lost Track - D.C.R. Pollock
Toy Car - Six Impala
Lowkey as Hell - Waterparks
Twitterloser - AViT
Positions - Ariana Grande
If You Love Me - Elder Brother
Skin to Skin - Movements
Eventually, Darling - Declan Mckenna
1015 - Glass Beach
Mood - 24k Goldn
If You're Too Shy - The 1975
Sway - Bearings
Cinammon - Hayley Williams
Cemetary Sounds - Lilac Queen
Flor De Belem - Lucas Brito
The Rise and Fall - Mallcops
Armor - Dive at Dawn
Pity Case - King Yosef
Therefore I Am - Billie Eilish
The Adults Are Talking - The Strokes
Self-Destruction - Spanish Love Songs



Full List of Favorite Releases

Hardcore Releases:

California Cursed - Drain
One Scene Unity Compilation - Various Artists
My People...Hold On - Zulu
My Life is Over - Militarie Gun
In times of Desperation - Rain of Salvation
Rage of Deliverance - Vanguard
A Truth We Still Believe - Ecostrike
The Fire Rages on - Burning Strong
World House - Mil-Spec
World of Pleasure - World of Pleasure
No Blame...Just Facts - Pain of Truth
Promo 2020 - Centra
The Brighter Side - Take it to Heart
Service Weapon - SPY
Lavender - Initiate
2020 FLEX - SPEED
Buggin' Out - Buggin'
Demo 2 - Despize
Killing Me - Killing Me
Speedway - Speedway
Demo 2020 - xDetestx
Closed Forever - Insecure
D.E.M.O. - Outta Pocket
Demo 2020 - Broken Vow
Sleep Deprivation - Mortality Rate

Most Dangerous Game - Kharma
Swingin' Swords Choppin Lords - Mindforce
Demo 2020 - Glean
Loyalty at All Costs - Gridiron
Promo 2020 - One Step Close
Speed Kills - Chubby and the Gang
Cost of Sacrifice - Chamber
Impenetrable Cerebral Fortress - Gulch
Rather Be Alone - Power Alone
Lament - Touche Amore
Internal Incarceration - Year of the Knife
Hope and Defiance - Life Force
A Lover Quarrel Compilation - Various Artists
Nardcore 4 Life - Various Artists
Uniform Repression - Peace Test
Exsim - Exsim
Exhumation - buriedbutstillbreathing
One Way Track - End It
Demonstration - Abrasion
New Form - Youth Collapse
Demo - Friction
Our Power - Pummel
Genesis Demo 2020 - Pillars of Ivory
Better You than Me - Be All End All
Between Life - Typecaste
Demo '20 - Fading Signal
Last Words... - Cauldron

Non Hardcore Releases:

How I'm Feeling Now - Charli XCX (Hyperpop)
Punisher - Phoebe Bridgers (Singer Songwriter)
Rat's Nest // Out There - D.C.R. Pollock &
Derek Ted (Singer Songwriter)
Hot Muligan - (Pop Punk/Emo)
Shore - Fleet Foxes (Folk Rock)
Sawayama - Rina Sawayama (Pop)
Zeroes - Declan McKenna (Rock)
I Won't Fade on You - Elder Brother (Rock)
From the Leaves of Your Garden - Modern
Color (Rock)
The New Abnormal - The Strokes (Rock)
12th House Rock - Narrowhead (Rock/Alt
Metal)
Dedicated Side B - Carly Rae Jepson (Pop)
Satan is King - ACxDC (Death Metal)
Amber Park - Mat Kerekes (Rock)

Here, Online - Worst Party Ever (Emo)
If Only - Lilac Queen (Shoegaze/Emo)
Demo 2020 - GI Bill (Post Hardcore?)
The Sky Drapes... - Lucas Brito (Brazilian)
No Pressure - No Pressure (Pop Punk)
Buttersock // Freddy Benson - Carly Cosgrove
(Emo)
Brave Faces Everyone - Spanish Love Songs
(Emo)
Pedals for Armor - Hayley Williams (Pop Rock)
POST HUMAN: SURVIVAL HORROR - Bring Me
the Horizon (Pop/Rock/Metal)
Hello, It's You - Bearings (Pop Punk)
I Let It In and It Took Everything - Loathe (Metal-
core)
We Made Plans... - Mallcops
Food House - Food House (Hyperpop)
A Brief Inquiry... - The 1975 (Pop/ Electronic)
No Good Left To Give - Movements (Pop Punk/
Emo)
Wflytd - Six Impala (Hyperpop)





Young Person Showcase:

What's your name and what is it that you do?

My name is Amiri Nash! I write poetry but also narrative pieces. I am super into social justice, and love to write about issues that deserve attention and fixing. I also enjoy writing about things that bring me joy and incorporating them into justice based pieces. I am also the DC Youth Poet Laureate.

What are some of the coolest things you've had happen to you with your writing?

I recently started publishing pieces, and I published my first piece in Teen Vogue. That was super exciting to me because I used to read the publication growing up. I was also super honored to be named the Youth Poet Laureate because my biggest inspirations in writing were Laureates.

What's some music you've been listening to lately?

Recently I have been listening to a lot of Stevie Wonder, Rachmaninoff, Yves Tumor, Etta James, and Bee Gees. I'm a classical pianist and studying music allowed me to have an appreciation for all types of music

Where do you wanna be in 10 years?

In 10 years I'll be 29. I hope to have written a lot more, published pieces, and be contributing to the world in a way that inspires whilst helping those around me in all veins of life.



Hey! Thanks for reading issue 4 of VOS fanzine. I hope you enjoyed! I had a lot of fun with this one for sure. Got to work a ton with friends and meet a ton of new bands. Next issue will be fun. I don't wanna give away much but it'll definitely be another themed issue. I haven't done one of those since issue 2! Should be fun. Another little update on me is that I started doing interviews for Brown Interviews, the interviewing club at my school. You can find us at Browninterviews.org. For that, I will be trying to interview more mainstream celebrities and musicians than hardcore bands, so if you like that stuff or like my interviews, go check it out (also if you have any connections hit me up plz). Anyway, thank you to Joven, Dustin, Jem, Sammy, Crystal, Phoebe, Mom, Dad, all of stinky luca, all of TITH, Programme, Local Deadbeat, Lucas, Mel, Ugly and Proud Records, all of Dive, Flint, Ethan, Nick, Asher, Leelya, Anna, Wyatt, Amiri, Ellie, Ruby, Nan, David, any anyone else who makes this zine happen. Now as always, STOP MAKING EXCUSES. This is your sign. Go start the zine you want to make. Go start the band you wanna try. Go start the label or book or whatever it is you wanna do. Just do it. No excuses. Shoutout OCHC and RIHC. ACAB and Black lives STILL fucking matter. Thanks y'all!

-Evan VOS

IG: @voiceofstrengthfanzine

Twitter: @VOSfanzine

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